



Somerset County Council working in partnership with Skanska

ADEPT President's Award 2019

Category: Deploying digital innovation and technology

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Using technology to drive efficiencies and improve outcomes in delivering highways services in Somerset

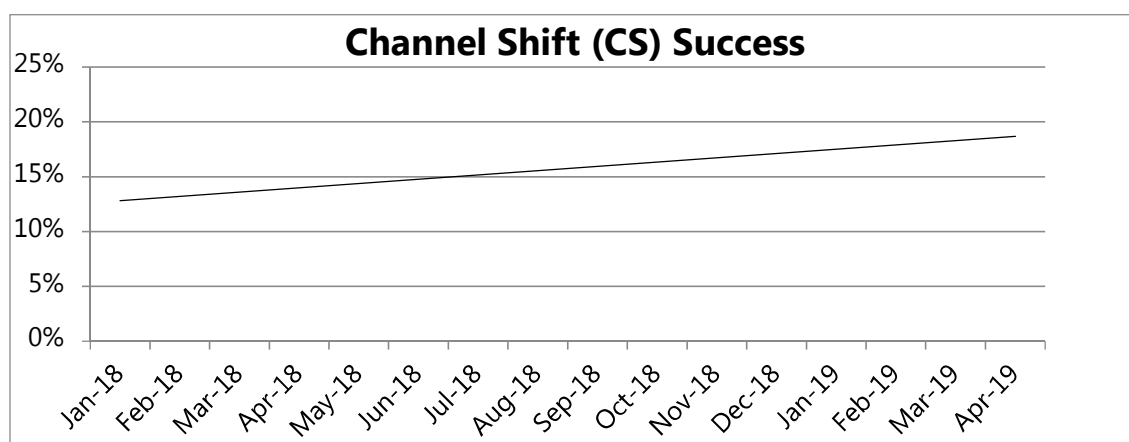
Somerset County Council has reviewed and redefined its end-to-end approach to receiving, managing and delivering highway-related service requests. This has seen a step-change in the way we use technology to provide better services to customers in Somerset.

The improvement journey has involved close working between our Highways and Traffic Management teams, Customer Contact Centre, and our principal highways contractor Skanska.

The methodology that has been adopted has resulted in an active channel shift where customers are encouraged to self-serve rather than visit or phone. Meanwhile, we have collaboratively re-engineered our business processes working closely with Skanska to find further operational delivery efficiencies, savings and improvements.

At the front end, Customer Service Advisors now actively channel shift by promoting self-service using digital platforms which has a number of benefits:

- Quicker service;
- Flexibility of being able to report an issue at any time of the day;
- Automatic updates are generated for the customer when reporting a pothole, for example, negating the need for them to make further contact; and
- Contemporary updates on services such as winter gritting or grass cutting.



To complement the channel shift programme, the highway works task ordering process was reviewed and amended using a Systems Thinking approach.

A Systems Thinking methodology views a process more holistically, improving the understanding of how each component part of the process works and how the process is affected when decisions are made.

In the past the majority of enquiries came through on the telephone and needed to be manually logged onto our digital asset management system. This led to the potential for duplication and was also subject to human error.

The fundamental change resulting from Systems Thinking relates to the task order data now being managed digitally at all times from the point of the customer enquiry through to the creation of the task order. Previously this information was entered by hand at the outset and the linking of the task order data and customer enquiry was also done manually.

This automated process has reduced errors, eliminated duplication and slashed the time taken to respond to a customer's enquiry.

By systematically analysing the component parts of the process we were able to gain insight into root causes of problems and opportunities for improvement and test better ways of operating the process.

By using the Systems Thinking methodology, we anticipate this will save around £70,000 (compared to £50,000 estimated at the outset). The time efficiencies gained also allows Somerset County Council staff to carry out other duties and means they now spend a greater amount of time inspecting roads, proactively managing the network and dealing with other customer enquiries. We have also seen a transformation in the number of calls being received into the contact centre as customers no longer follow up on the progress of works.