



CIVICA

Civica at the heart of Spelthorne Borough Council's flood response

Digital360 enables council to handle exceptional call volume and prioritise service delivery to vulnerable citizens

Surging call volumes demanded a flexible customer contact system.

Spelthorne Borough Council in Surrey, with a population of almost 100,000, has a long standing working relationship with Civica. The 2011 integration of its Customer Services and Revenues personnel, using Digital360 in Revenues and Benefits, improved call response times generating savings of £200,000. However, when serious flooding hit Spelthorne, triggering a huge surge in calls to customer services staff, the value and flexibility of the solution really came to the fore.

In February 2014 the River Thames flooded, damaging residential and commercial property and disrupting vital infrastructure such as roads and sewage pumping. This triggered 10,000 flood-related calls from the public to Spelthorne's Borough Emergency Centre (BEC) in a 10-day period – equivalent to 3 months' worth of calls.

The challenge was to build an overall picture of what was happening across the borough from hundreds of individual calls to identify the most vulnerable people. Materials such as sandbags were in short supply, making it critical to identify the areas at the greatest risk from rising water levels.

Outcomes

- ▶ **Enabled most effective use of Streetscene** teams and equipment
- ▶ Ensured that scare materials **reached the most vulnerable residents**
- ▶ **Provided a vital big picture** of the borough's emerging flood hotspots
- ▶ **Streamlined communications** between different council services
- ▶ **Delivered relevant, up to date information** for internal and external stakeholders.



New scripts and workflows built in just **15 minutes**



Support for **c.1000% increase** in calls



10,000 calls reduced to 1,600 work requests

"When you're in an emergency and 10,000 calls are coming in and you're dealing with police, fire service, county councillors and MPs, you need a slick system to coordinate."

Linda Norman,
Customer Service Manager, Spelthorne Borough Council

Digital360 proves its ability to deliver in a crisis

Digital360 enabled the BEC to quickly identify 'hot-spots' with the most serious problems. This was vital in streamlining communications between Customer Services and Streetscene.

Linda Norman, the council's Head of Customer Services and the BEC's Head of Corporate Cell and Communications, managed the 17 frontline staff handling calls from the public and routing requests for aid to Streetscene personnel. She ensured that essential data was gathered and that calls were filtered and prioritised. This determined the action required reached the Streetscene teams working on the ground.

Getting information to the teams making assessments on the ground and keeping the public informed was vital, while also providing reports to councillors and the Chief Executive.

When the crisis hit, Linda Norman was able to set up three new flood-specific Digital360 scripts and workflow processes in just 15 minutes – enabling staff to capture essential data from incoming calls, prioritise requests and route them to the relevant department.

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Digital360's flexibility was key in a rapidly evolving environment

The unpredictable nature of the crisis demanded the ability to create and disseminate new call scripts, workflows and documents rapidly, without disrupting operations. This could be done in a matter of minutes while the system was still online,

as Linda Norman, Customer Service Manager at Spelthorne explained, "The key with Digital360 is that you can create a simple process in a matter of minutes. We didn't have to bring the system down to implement change – we could do this while the system was up in real time."

Offers of help from volunteers prompted the creation of a new type of Digital360 call script, allowing customer services staff to capture volunteer information and automatically email it to volunteer co-ordinators. Later, the same script was used to create a website e-form where volunteers could register online, freeing up the phones for urgent calls from the public.

Disseminating information was a critical part of Customer Services' role during the floods. Digital360 provided real-time access to notes from Streetscene, so callers could be informed of planned and completed actions. Councillors and MPs, calling on behalf of concerned constituents, could also be kept informed, while the council Chief Executive received detailed daily updates.

Delivering the best service to the public in difficult times

One of the key elements was to provide up-to-date information to support coordination between the public, the BEC and Streetscene, making it indispensable in delivering the best possible service to the borough's residents in a distressing situation.

Digital360 helped Spelthorne to cope with potential information overload and allowed important, actionable conclusions to emerge from the mass of data flowing in.

The ability to organise information in a fast evolving, complex environment helped to turn 10,000 calls to Customer Services into just 1,600 specific work requests for Streetscene.

Finally, the information in Digital360 played a critical role in reassuring a frightened general public and enabled Customer Services to demonstrate to councillors and MPs that the situation was under control.

"I don't think we'd have managed to handle the flooding half as well without Civica. I don't know how my staff would have been able to capture the information."

Linda Norman,
Customer Service Manager, Spelthorne Borough Council