



Islington

Consona Customer Management

London Borough of Islington Takes Customer Service to New Heights

How Consona CRM has Helped Islington Develop an Award-Winning Contact

A Reputation for Award-Winning Service

Contact Islington is an innovative 24X7 service centre within a London borough (or local government authority), providing residents



with a single point of contact for all council services and information. With an average of 27,000 calls and 1,400 face-to-face meetings each week,

only Liverpool and Birmingham councils experience higher rates of contact. Given that Islington is one of the smallest authorities in the country, with only 180,000 residents, the level of interaction it has achieved with its citizens is remarkable.

The success of Contact Islington comes from the completeness and high quality of the service it delivers and is the result of an unrelenting focus on customer service supported by the use of advanced technology. In 2005-2006, over 97 percent of customers surveyed by telephone and 94 percent of customers surveyed in the service centre rated the service they received as good or excellent. Over the past four years, this performance boosted the centre's reputation with residents and contributed to its achievement of "fastest improving authority" status in 2004 and 2005. The service was externally recognised as a centre of excellence by the Audit Commission, commented upon in 2006 CPA scores, and then recognised in the 2006 National Customer Service Awards

when, against strong competition from both private and public sector candidates, Contact Islington won a prestigious Customer Service Contact Centre of the Year award.

Customer Focus Spurs "One Islington" Initiative

Islington's success was not achieved overnight. The drive to improve services began six years ago at a time when Islington fared poorly in surveys of council services. In response, new council policies were established to ensure residents would see the council as a single organisation under the banner of "One Islington." Customer focus was declared a top priority and the transformation into a customer-focused organisation began. This initiative was combined with the e-Government push for a more extensive use of technology in government. As such, developing a customer contact centre became a key component of Islington's eGovernment and Customer Focus (eCF) strategy.

Consona Customer Management Creates Single Point of Contact for Residents

The vision for Contact Islington is "to fundamentally change the way customers view the council by providing a flexible and responsive service while improving performance and efficiency." The strategy to realise this ambition involved establishing the call centre as a single point of contact for all communication channels, providing a complete, consistent and holistic view of all council-related information and services.



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Return on Investment at a Glance:

Consona Customer Management has enabled Contact Islington to achieve major benefits, including:

- Significantly improved survey ratings and call resolution percentages within 18 months of the implementation — helping the centre achieve the highest percentage rise in customer satisfaction in London.
- The creation of a one-stop shop for citizen calls — 80 percent of transactions are resolved with a single call.
- The funding of a 24/7 operation at no incremental growth in cost to the authority, thanks to savings generated by reduced handling costs.
- The ability to easily add new, customer-centric features and services within 4 to 6 weeks.
- Improved overall understanding of customers' needs and, as a result, better spending decisions and more efficiently allocated resources.

“By using Consona Customer Management as a single repository for customer data, we ensure that anyone who accesses the system can quickly and easily gain a 360-degree view of the customer. Consequently, they can concentrate on providing good service, rather than trying to obtain information.”

— **Kevin Gibbs**, Head of Contact Islington, London Borough of Islington

In 2003, Contact Islington began its implementation of Consona Customer Management. The centre opened on schedule later that year, and within 18 months, had already boosted its survey ratings from “poor” to “good”; established a complete view of all aspects of the customer, including historical interactions, for council and contact centre agents; and helped staff conduct complex transactions faster, without having to repeat information that was already in the system.

In March 2007 Contact Islington upgraded its Consona solution with the aim of improving its efficiency and effectiveness still further. In particular, Contact Islington was seeking to:

- Protect its “Three Star” CPA rating (Central Government performance rating), maintain its reputation within the borough, and improve the perception of elected members, staff and customers of council operations.
- Deliver an organisation-wide solution that would not only help fulfil obligations to central government, but also deliver significant public service efficiency savings.
- Introduce additional and improved functionality in order to:
 - Continue achieving single contact resolution for 80 percent of all transactions.
 - Seamlessly integrate front- and back-office systems to improve the data flow and consistency through the authority’s many disparate, legacy systems.
 - Allow a larger percentage of the authority’s general administration processes to be fulfilled via the front office, with a hand-off to back-office service partner specialists when required.

“By putting CRM at the centre of our system, we have reduced duplication of information, centralised knowledge and improved our customers’ experience,” said Kevin Gibbs, head of Contact Islington.

Technology Revolution Pays Off

Since the first implementation in 2003, Contact Islington has consistently met and exceeded its demanding performance targets. Use of the centre has grown steadily and it now handles more than 1.2 million contacts per year. In recent benchmarks against other London local authorities, Contact Islington was singled out for its excellent customer satisfaction levels. A key contributor to this achievement is the formula of innovative technology supporting highly motivated and well-trained staff.

Customers can now make one call for all their various council issues. Given that Islington has over 200 different systems, the council’s ability to offer a one-stop shop is a big help. Call centre agents also can communicate more appropriately with a diverse resident base and take the opportunity to proactively bring important information to customers’ attention, based on knowledge of their circumstances.

In addition, internal morale has been boosted. Because agents have a 360-degree view of every customer, they have all the answers at their fingertips to deliver customer satisfaction. According to Gibbs, motivated staff perform well and are less likely to leave, which contributes to the efficient operation of the centre.

Summing up the results of Contact Islington so far, Gibbs concluded: “Consona Customer Management has been instrumental in supporting our authority in both a cultural change revolution (changing the way we think about and deal with customers) and an organisational change revolution (how we organise departments around customer service). However, Consona has been critical to our technology change revolution, playing a key part in consolidating databases and creating interfaces between disparate systems to provide an unprecedented level of integration.”

“Consona CRM played an important role in our ability to be recognised for excellence in customer service. Our community should be able to access services, pay bills, book appointments and report problems and concerns across the public sector in the easiest way possible.”

— **Kevin Gibbs**,
Head of Contact Islington,
London Borough of Islington

Consona CRM

Consona Corporation
450 East 96th Street, Suite 300
Indianapolis, IN 46240

Toll Free/Fax:
(888) 8 CONSONA
(888) 826-6766

info@consona.com
www.consona.com/crm