



Why customer service is key to the public sector agenda

An outline of the growing importance of
effective Customer Service Management



What is CSM in the public sector arena?

Where the private sector focuses on customer service, the public sector has citizen engagement. Irrespective of an organisations' sector, the underlying focus remains the same – improving the quality of service delivered to customers/citizens and ultimately increasing customer satisfaction.

Unsurprisingly, technology is being used to help deliver on that over-arching goal. Customer Service Management (CSM) is the natural evolution of CRM (Customer Relationship Management), centralising customer data and bringing intelligence and automation to service delivery.

CSM improves service operations and engages customers with digital workflows. It helps to break down information silos by enabling front, middle and back office functions to seamlessly work together.

Why does CSM matter to the public sector?

If 2020 taught us anything, it was to expect the unexpected. Few would have foreseen the need to deliver civic services while confined to their own home for months at a time.

With offices closed, gaps in systems and processes have been exposed. Worse still, the negative effects on services delivered to citizens were magnified. Paper-based forms completed by citizens need to be manually scanned and emailed to remote workers, ready to be re-keyed into systems. Or remote working platforms designed for 40% capacity have been overloaded as nearly 100% of staff log on from home.

Virtually every process has been pushed to the limit – and beyond.

Many of the changes enacted to assist with service delivery during the pandemic are likely to remain in place - including remote and flexible working provisions. Citizens may have been more forgiving whilst their local authority struggled to adapt, but this goodwill will quickly evaporate as normality returns.

Improving customer service delivery must therefore be a priority to successfully adapt to the new normal, particularly as public sentiment is increasingly negative about the future; with 45% of citizens expecting the quality of public services to decline post-pandemicⁱ.

45%

of citizens expect the quality of public services to decline after the pandemic

– Deloitte

Unfortunately, local public services are currently ranked 10th out of 13 sectors based on the July 2020 UK Customer Service Index. Despite being in the middle of a pandemic, the ranking increased by 1.4 points over the 2019 score. According to the people surveyed, this was due to improvements in complaint handling and first-time query resolutionⁱⁱ. It is imperative that this upward trend is maintained.

Even before the pandemic took hold, public sector bodies were struggling to deliver mandated services because of austerity and funding cuts. It is extremely likely that budget allocations will continue to shrink as central government works to reduce national debt accrued during the coronavirus response. Efforts to contain or reduce spend will become ever more important as the Local Government Agency predicts a Covid-driven funding gap of £2.3bnⁱⁱⁱ.

Again, CSM has a role to play in this: the benefits of formalised customer service management technologies are tangible – with an average 176% return on investment and payback in just six months^{iv}.

CSM users report an average ROI of 176% in just six months

– ServiceNow

Expected benefits of Customer Service Management

Because CSM radically gives greater control over all customer interactions, along with the ability to extract meaningful insights, the benefits will be felt across your organisation.



Internal efficiency improvements

Improving operational efficiency has always been one of the key factors for improving service operations and raising customer satisfaction – and helping to reduce costs. By simplifying access to citizen data, stakeholders are better able to make informed strategic decisions, answer questions and take action.

Importantly, stakeholders all work from the same data sets, allowing for better understanding of individual citizens and their needs. By breaking down departmental data silos, you no longer have to wait for other stakeholders to intervene - employees are empowered to take immediate, effective action on behalf of citizens.

A good CSM solution will allow you to create digital workflows and playbooks, formalising and refining many of the processes used by your internal teams when dealing with stakeholder queries. These workflows can then be accelerated through automation, ensuring that issues are escalated to the correct agent for the fastest possible resolution.

Centralisation of customer service data also increases opportunities for work anywhere and improved information sharing. Field-based employees have real-time access to the details they need to serve citizens effectively. And that same remote-access functionality can be used to facilitate remote working for customer service agents working from home. The CSM platform is used as a single point-of-truth for all citizen interactions.

These efficiency gains equate directly to improvements in quality of service, such as reductions of up to 70% in enquiry resolution times¹.

ServiceNow Customer Service Management (CSM) enables DEFRA to knit together a variety of existing cloud-based reporting systems, producing a coherent workflow for its new applications. By connecting different departments and processes, issues are handled efficiently and proactively. In addition, CSM has enabled DEFRA to function effectively through COVID-19 restrictions. DEFRA has increased its team of agent analysts by 40%, onboarding all to the CSM platform while working from home.

CSM may reduce enquiry resolution times by

70%

or more

– ServiceNow



Better quality services

Quality of service depends on using all available data to better understand citizens and their needs, this allows for the best solution to be found. Sharing data internally between stakeholders provides valuable insights, which can improve training and knowledge sharing; if you can quantify and measure customer interactions, you are better able to manage them. This in turn can improve customer retention.

By allowing appropriate data access, it becomes much easier to accelerate the customer journey. Incoming requests for service can be quickly assigned or escalated to the correct team. This will increase the likelihood of solving customer queries first time and reduce incidences of repeat contact, this will improve satisfaction, free up resources and lower costs.

By investing in a Customer Service Management tool, some authorities have reduced enquiry assignment times by 99%^{vi}.

CSM can reduce enquiry assignment times by

99%

– ServiceNow



Improved citizen engagement

Simplifying contact with the local authority improves citizen engagement – including via self-service channels. By implementing automated systems that perform many of the most common tasks, service users can decide when and how they interact, moving away from rigid office hours that encourage disengagement.

Engagement is particularly important in the public sector; research suggests that citizens give higher satisfaction ratings for the local authority services that they actually use.

Another benefit of self-service operations is that they free up front-line resources. This allows your organisation to concentrate on those citizens who are not digitally engaged or who require additional assistance, such as those who are not digitally enabled, or those who may need additional support to get the right service outcome. As the CSM platform matures, your organisation will be able to take a more proactive approach to service delivery.



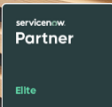
Improved service provisioning and personalisation

Cost savings realised by improved efficiencies can be reinvested where they will have the greatest effect. This could be in the form of improved targeting and personalisation, or to develop wholly new services and channels based on interactions with citizens.

CSM simplifies the collection and collation of data from service users, making them more likely to share the information your organisation needs. Planning teams benefit from more data to work with, allowing for increasingly granular analysis and planning of services that better meet the needs of citizens.



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Conclusion

CSM provides a vehicle for change. It will not solve issues with service delivery alone – but it provides your organisation with the data required to make smarter decisions at every point of the customer journey. It will also be crucial to helping win over the citizens – just 19% trust their local authority to use personal data appropriately^{vii}.

Leaders across the public sector are keen to retain their new-found operational agility – but are concerned that their gains will be quickly lost once the pandemic is declared “over”. As individual commented to Deloitte, “There’s a gravitational pull back to normality but there’s a long-term opportunity to change cultures and make us more effective.”

Importantly, applying CSM data provides more opportunities to achieve your dual goals of reducing costs and improving quality of service delivered to your citizen stakeholders.

“There’s a gravitational pull back to normality but there’s a long term opportunity to change cultures and make us more effective.”

– A local government leader speaking to Deloitte

Takeaways

- An effective Customer Service Management tool solves the problem of enabling staff with appropriate data access for them to successfully fulfil their roles, making them more effective at quickly and effectively solving citizen issues.
- Improved data access delivers efficiency improvements and cost savings, as well as allowing organisations to effectively solve queries remotely (and in turn, keeping employees safe during this time).
- Customer satisfaction improves by reducing instances of repeated contact with issues which persist or were never solved.
- Managers and key stakeholders will be able to produce relevant reports to help create continuous improvement programs.
- Return on investment of the tool is gained after, on average, 6 months, saving money long-term.
- Employees work more efficiently, with the ability to assign and escalate issues.



About Unifii

Unifii was founded by a group of former client-side digital transformation professionals. By immersing ourselves in our clients' businesses and connecting with their strategy, objectives, and goals, we become an extension of their team. Combining our technology and product expertise with passion and experience means we deliver exceptional results for our customers. As an Elite ServiceNow partner, we enable you to use the platform to its full potential and allow you to achieve your business goals.

Our Customers

The Unifii team have delivered many digital initiatives for public sector customers and we continue to partner with them to enable and transform them further. Through these engagements, we have learned the key drivers, pain points and needs in this industry in order to create a tailored, consultative approach for our clients.

Unifii clients include:



ⁱ The State of the State 2020-21 | Government in the pandemic and beyond – Deloitte -

<https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/uk/Documents/public-sector/deloitte-uk-state-of-the-state-2020.pdf>

ⁱⁱ July 2020 UK Customer Satisfaction Index – Institute of Customer Service -

https://ip.instituteofcustomerservice.com/hubfs/UKCSI%20July%202020/ICS%20UKCSI%20Exec%20Summary_July%202020%206%20July-v4.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ LGA steps up lobbying over council tax and £2.3bn Covid funding gap – Local Government Chronicle -

<https://www.lgcplus.com/finance/lga-steps-up-lobbying-over-council-tax-and-2-3bn-covid-funding-gap-12-01-2021/>

^{iv} The Total Economic Impact of ServiceNow Customer Service Management – Forrester Consulting -

<https://www.servicenow.com/content/dam/servicenow-assets/public/en-us/doc-type/resource-center/analyst-report/servicenow-csm-tei-multi-company-composite-study.pdf>

^v Tennessee DHS redefines the customer experience for government services - ServiceNow -

<https://www.servicenow.com/customers/tennessee-dept-of-human-services.html>

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} The State of the State 2020-21 | Government in the pandemic and beyond – Deloitte -

<https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/uk/Documents/public-sector/deloitte-uk-state-of-the-state-2020.pdf>