

# Macfarlane technology drives customer service improvements at Derbyshire County Council

Submitted by: Gray Associates

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Derbyshire County Council has set up a 24/7 customer contact centre with the aim of providing a single point of access for the first time resolution of service queries - at any time of the day or night.

The new contact centre in Darley Dale, Derbyshire, went live on 2nd December 2004, and currently handles around 63,000 calls a month. The centre employs 41 people, with numbers expected to grow to around 70 people within the next two years.

Investments in advanced telephone technology from Macfarlane and CRM technology from Northgate have been key to the service improvements being delivered by the new centre; helping the Council achieve 'first call problem resolution' of around 90% for the vast majority of services it handles.

Macfarlane CallPlus contact centre software is used to answer, intelligently route, manage and report on Call Centre calls, and work is underway to handle switchboard traffic in the same way. In the future, the CallPlus software will give management the ability to add new features such as call recording and interactive voice response on the same technology platform. The CallPlus system is tightly integrated with the Council's main Ericsson telephone switch and with Northgate Front Office CRM software. Front Office manages the Council's customer interactions - providing contact centre personnel with customer histories and other relevant data as well as creating customer records and logging calls.

An excellent working environment has also been created at the new centre with an emphasis on 'team working'. Contact centre seating is organised in circular team 'pods', with agents using new space-saving flat screen monitors. Advisors can also view overall departmental performance from their desks for the first time via the Macfarlane PC wallboard technology installed at the centre.

The Darley Dale centre replaces an earlier contact centre originally set up in the Council's Matlock offices in 2001. The new centre has afforded the Council the opportunity to not only vastly improve the technology used to manage customer queries but also expand the range of services provided. Originally, the Matlock centre was set up to handle general information, travel concessions (i.e. OAP and student travel passes) and literature requests.

Today, the number of services run through the Darley Dale contact centre has been extended to around 70 to include recruitment calls, library calls, highways and street lighting, countryside services, and tourism. As a 24/7 centre, it is also able to handle out-of-hours and overflow calls for a number of Council departments (including Social Services, Emergency Property Calls and Welfare Rights) and Partners (such as Chesterfield Borough Council and two other local councils).

"The Macfarlane call management system is considerably more flexible than the call queuing system used at our Matlock centre" explains Helen Barker, Contact Centre Manager at Call Derbyshire. "It's easy to set up new advisor groups and change overflow procedures dynamically, and more effective when it comes to accessing MIS reports and managing queues."

Derbyshire County Council serves around 750,000 citizens across 8 district and borough councils. The Council was rated as 'Excellent' by the Audit Commission in December 2004 in terms of the way it serves local people - the third year running it has received an Excellent rating.

David Hickman, Head of the Council's Change Management Team said: "We are doing all we can to live up to our vision of improving life for local people. We are listening to local people and shaping our services to deliver their priorities. I'm confident that we will build on this performance for many years to come."

"We're delighted to be working with Derbyshire County Council on this exciting new project" said William Gray, Managing Director of Macfarlane Telesystems. "The County has built an enviable reputation for quality service and, with the new customer service centre and clear commitment from the top down, it is setting the standards other Councils will want to follow."

#### About Macfarlane Telesystems

Founded in 1987, Macfarlane is a UK developer and supplier of communication solutions to service providers, enterprises and public sector organisations. Its CallPlus platform supports a range of applications including contact centre, IVR and unified communications. The company delivers cost-effective, market-focused solutions directly and through strategic partnerships with vendors such as Northgate, Onyx, Sx3, Deloitte and Lagan.

Macfarlane has established a strong position in the public sector where it assists central and local government reach e-government targets, providing a citizen-centric approach while working within Best Value practices. Existing customers number more than 50 local councils including those within the Government's Partnership programme such as Somerset Direct Partnership, the Warwickshire On-line Partnership and more recently, the Cornish Key Partnership. CallPlus has enabled these Partnerships to link their many local councils and create single 'virtual' contact centres that serve citizens on a county-wide basis. More details can be found at [www.macfar.co.uk](http://www.macfar.co.uk)

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