

# AI to the rescue: first aid for busy contact centres in local government

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Can Artificial Intelligence (AI) really deflect calls away from the contact centre? This is the question many local government organisations are asking as they strive to serve the community at reduced cost. Henry Jinman of EBI.AI outlines 7 reasons why conversational AI holds the answer.

Research suggests that the majority of calls coming into local government contact centres are about revenues and benefits, waste and recycling, planning and highways. First-line agents' resolution rates for such calls vary significantly from 98% for waste and recycling to only 33% for revenues and benefits.\* At a time when local government organisations face even greater pressure to deliver fast, efficient services within limited budgets, it is revealing to learn just how much it costs to handle these enquiries. For example, at one organisation in the West Midlands, the average cost-per-serve for face-to-face meetings with residents is £6.90, for telephone interactions it is £4.02 and amazingly, it costs only 15p for web self-service.\*

These statistics tell us that self-service really is the way to go, taking pressure off busy contact centres by deflecting the most common calls away from human agents. In fact, by implementing the latest self-service options such as chatbots and AI assistants, local governments can expect to see deflection rates between 30% and 70%.\*

## AI to the rescue in 7 ways

So what's behind the science and can innovations in Artificial Intelligence really hold the key to giving communities exactly what they want while allowing local governments to minimise the burden on the public purse?

Here are 7 reasons why the latest conversational AI solutions can help innovate customer service functions in local government:

1. They are super-smart – and this comes down to machine learning. Quite simply, AI assistants learn to respond to questions the more they are used. Once trained to respond to statements such as “my bin hasn't been collected” they can then pull answers from a response store to smoothly and accurately provide fast customer service to similar statements.
2. They are fast and accurate – thanks to AI's power to capture, sift through and analyse practically unlimited amounts of data. When integrated with a local authority's back-office systems, chatbots and AI assistants find all the information they need to provide rapid and accurate answers to frequently asked questions.
3. AI performs like the model employee – AI solutions never get tired, they don't need holidays, are never sick and because they don't suffer from emotions, they never have a bad day. Instead, residents are free to self-serve any time of day or night, making it possible for council contact centres to extend their opening hours without hiring additional staff.

4. AI Assistants understand humans - using Natural Language Processing (NLP), AI assistants speak the same language as people meaning all parts of the community, especially the elderly or vulnerable, who may prefer the human touch, experience the same warm welcome they expect from their local authority, even when talking to an AI solution.

5. AI future-proofs customer service – the best AI tools can be up and running in weeks rather than months and like EBI.AI's Lobster platform, they are technology agnostic in design. This allows local governments to customise them, whether that's switching to other NLP frameworks or quickly deploying other channels to accommodate the needs of the community now and in the future.

6. Get it right first time around – by facilitating the all-important Proof of Concept (PoC) stage. Local governments can test out their new AI assistant before it goes live to see how well it interprets and understands common questions and then assess its tangible impact on reducing call volumes and call handling costs.

Working with the right AI lab can also save on people costs. Choosing a partner with the ability to curate content, administer the AI Assistant, review conversations and improve AI training saves on resources. All that is required is a content administrator to make decisions on behalf of the local government organisation, rather than additional people to manage the AI solution itself.

7. AI solutions can help create cost-effective, connected councils – dealing with out-of-hours enquiries from residents can present opportunities for instant ROI. If local councils pool their AI resources, even greater savings and ROI can be achieved. Report findings also predict huge economies of scale. For example, if 20 councils collaborated on a chatbot or AI assistant the estimated savings across all 20 councils would be £2.2m.\*

Real-life success story illustrates the transformative power of AI

In 2019, the team at EBI.AI developed two conversational AI assistants for a local government authority that was looking to innovate their customer service and reduce the number of costly frequently asked questions that the contact centre received.

Want to learn more? Discover how they successfully resolved 85% of queries to the virtual customer assistant (35% of them outside call centres hours) while creating millions of pounds worth of savings by downloading EBI.AI's latest case study (<https://ebi.ai/case-studies/local-government-ai-case-study/>).

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About EBI.AI

Established in 2014, EBI.AI is among the most advanced UK labs to create fully managed, Enterprise-grade

AI assistants. These assistants help clients to provide their customers with faster and better resolutions to their queries, and liberate front-line customer service agents from the dull, repetitive and mundane.

EBI.AI selects the best AI and cloud services available from IBM, Amazon, Microsoft and others, combined with bespoke AI models to deliver its AI communication platform, called Lobster.

Combined with its over 19 years of experience working with big data, analytics and systems integration it has successfully implemented AI assistants that now handle hundreds of thousands of conversations a year across Transport & Travel, Property, Insurance, Public and Automotive industries.

For more information, please visit [www.ebi.ai](http://www.ebi.ai)

\* All references come from "ROI Analysis and Market Summary/Council Chatbots" – published by Torchbox in April 2019

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