CASE STUDY

DARLINGTON
Borough Council

The Borough of Darlington is a unitary authority and borough in County Durham, England, and has a population of more than 100,000 people. Darlington Borough Council is responsible for managing a wide range of services for its citizens, including education, transport, planning, social care, housing, libraries, public leisure facilities, public safety and waste management, to name just a few.

In order to deliver its services effectively, a number of contact channels are available to local citizens and businesses so they can discuss questions, order services or make payments via their preferred method – whether that's face-to-face, online, via email or over the phone.

We spoke to Andrew Hazlett, Systems & Process Officer, and Katie Ellison, Systems Administrator, to discuss the evolution of its contact centre in efficiently handling citizen's enquiries and payments.

THE COMPLIANCE CHALLENGE

"As an public-facing organisation, it is imperative that the council offers a choice of communication channels that consumers can use to access the services they need" confirms Katie Ellison, Systems Administrator.

"Our contact centre is the first point of contact for all of our services; our contact centre team handles all enquiries or puts callers in touch with specialist teams. This can be everything from setting up garden waste collection subscriptions to paying parking fines; calls are very varied.

"Everyone in our contact centre is enabled to take payments – around 160 people in all – although payments for our leisure services such as the Darlington Hippodrome and the Dolphin Leisure Centre are currently handled separately. Our long-term ambition is to centralise all payments into one system to not only deliver a consistent experience, but to streamline how we manage processes and importantly our security and compliance requirements."

Andrew Hazlett, Systems & Process Officer, "While our preference for payment transactions is online self service, we still have a requirement for being able to manage transactions over the phone, particularly for people who are digitally excluded.

As such, a large part of my role is to ensure that the council is adhering to the very latest compliance guidance from a payment and data security perspective, across all channels."

Having undertaken an exercise to self-certify the council's PCI DSS compliance status, it was agreed that telephone payments needed attention. Continues Andrew: "Previously, our contact centre agents would have to manually pause telephone recordings so we didn't capture any payment card details within call recordings but that still meant the information was exposed to our agents and infrastructure. I felt we could implement a solution that would remove the onus from our staff on pausing and resuming calls and stop the sensitive information entering our environment.

"We worked with our payment provider, Civica, to identify a solution that would future-proof our payment process and, with previous experience of PCI Pal, we were delighted to learn of their long-standing integration and partnership with PCI Pal."

THE SOLUTION

With PCI DSS compliance the main driver for the system review, the team worked on identifying a solution that would offer the council a solution that not only secures every transaction, but also enables the contact centre staff to remain in conversation with each caller to ensure every transaction is completed without worry.

Having reviewed a variety of solutions in the market, with many not meeting the council's requirements, the team knew that PCI Pal Agent Assist was the best solution for its needs:

Confirms Andrew: "We had previously worked with PCI Pal with a former communications provider, however when the contract ended with that provider the PCI Pal system wasn't carried over. When we undertook the system review, we knew we needed better support in this space, and we were very keen to reignite our relationship with PCI Pal. We knew that PCI Pal has a long standing partnership with Civica, and so was a huge advantage for us."

THE RESULTS

From initial conversations with PCI Pal and Civica to project roll-out, the process was very smooth and took just a matter of weeks as Andrew confirms:

"The integration and roll-out process was very smooth. Leanne from PCI Pal was our project manager and was excellent; she kept everything flowing and communication was always there. We use the Civica Webpay solution and the Agent Assist solution was integrated quickly so, when a payment is made in our contact centre, our team can simply log-in and initiate the payment for the caller; it's very straightforward."

Adds Katie: "From our team's perspective, the overall process to transition to Agent Assist has been straightforward. Our staff like the fact it's taken the onus off them to pause and resume telephone recording, and they are not privy to any sensitive payment information – it's one less thing for them to worry about. The training requirement was low as a result, as it's all very intuitive."

Concludes Andrew: "When implementing any new system, you worry that it's going to create a big change for users or the integration won't be as seamless as you anticipate, however with PCI Pal everything was so organised: the implementation was fast and communication was good. The team were responsive, from testing to go-live, and now it's live we are assured that the council is using the best payment compliance tool for our telephone payments; it's very reassuring."

AT A GLANCE

NO MORE COMPENSATING CONTROLS

Upgraded from an inadequate pause and resume solution.

COMPLIANCE FOR THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Agent Assist is extensively used in public sector deployments.

SIMPLE TO DEPLOY SOLUTION

PCI Pal has a long-standing partnership and integration with Civica.

HAPPY AGENTS

No pressure to manage pause and resume on call recordings and not exposed to sensitive card data.

GET IN TOUCH

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