



Public Services: Connecting Fragmented Customer Journeys

CCMA Leadership Forum Series

The Leadership Series is the documented output from the CCMA's series of Leadership Forum roundtables. These take place at the House of Lords and provide an exclusive opportunity for senior contact centre leaders to explore the key factors driving change in their industry - and to consider how to continue innovating and adding value for the benefit of the customer, colleagues, and the business.



At the Table

Colin Goodbody

Head of Customer Operations,
Bromford Flagship

Phil Quickenden

Head of Customer &
Registrations Services,
Camden Council

Sharron Colley

Head of Customer Experience,
Derbyshire County Council

Ash Blattner

Head of Parliamentary Contact
Centre, UK Parliament

Sabina Onwuka

Head of Customer Services,
London Borough of Barking
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David Condron

Head of Public Contact & Service
Delivery, Metropolitan Police

Dan Allen

Deputy Director Landlord Support,
National Residential Landlords
Association

Lisa Lewis

Director of Customer Enablement,
NHS Professionals

Annette Pearson

Head of Customer Experience,
NHS Property Services

John Murphy

Head of Customer Experience,
NHS Shared Business Services

Debbie Coveney

Head of Customer Service,
Royal Borough of Greenwich

Freda Owusu

Director of Customer Contact Centre,
Sovereign Network Group

Alex Nagle

Customer Services Director,
Vivid Homes

Sarah Williams

Chief Customer Experience Officer,
Westminster City Council

Ben Neo

Head of Contact Centre EMEA,
Zoom

Challenges of Complexity

UK public service contact centres are having to manage more interaction complexity and volume than ever before, driven by a combination of increasing contact variety, changing customer expectations, technological evolution, budget constraints, customer vulnerabilities and the ongoing cost of living crisis.

With this in mind, senior contact centre and customer experience leaders from across local government, housing, policing, healthcare and other public services came together at the House of Lords to discuss how the many challenges they face can manifest into fragmented customer journeys, and how to fix them.

Key Discussion Points

Fragmented journeys are often structural

Customer or resident journeys in public services often break down at predictable points – legacy systems that no longer communicate effectively, teams that work in silos and customer handoffs that lose context at different stages. Most organisations understand what a good journey looks like, but the challenge is the systems, structures and cultures built up over decades actively resist the kind of joined-up thinking that customers, or residents, increasingly expect.

'Customers' in the sector often have no choice

Unlike in competitive markets, people contacting public services – such as local councils or public health services – cannot simply take their business elsewhere. This absence of choice makes service quality a matter of equity rather than just experience. And when a journey fails, the consequences – delays in essential services, repeated contact, unresolved problems – can often fall hardest on people who already face difficult and challenging personal circumstances.

Internal politics can create multiple barriers

Fixing a fragmented journey is rarely a purely technical exercise. Leaders described teams that guard their systems, services that throw work 'over the wall', and on occasions, a reluctance to share ownership of the customer experience. Until everyone in the organisation understands their part in the customer or resident's journey – not just those in the contact centre – the journey cannot be truly connected.

AI offers potential but clear risks

Leaders shared enthusiasm for the ways AI can support contact centre teams – surfacing information faster, reducing cognitive load, improving consistency. But there was equal caution about the risks of deploying AI poorly in a public service context. When digital channels fail, customers and residents fall back on phone contact. When AI adds another layer to navigate rather than resolving a problem, it has the capacity to create even more disconnect.

Small wins build momentum

Wholesale customer journey transformation is rarely achievable in one go. Organisational leaders who feel they are making the most progress are often those pursuing incremental improvements rather than waiting for a perfect solution. Demonstrating the value of small changes in measurable terms can build internal confidence and an appetite to tackle larger challenges over time.





Ash Blattner

Head of Parliamentary Contact Centre,
UK Parliament

No one is immune from politics within their organisation, but stakeholder engagement is your greatest asset. Bring people with you early, consult widely and make the case for customer experience change in terms that resonate with each audience. The work is harder without allies. Build them before you need them.

Where Journeys Break Down

Among leaders, legacy technology was the most commonly cited structural barrier, with some systems and tools described as having been 'stitched together, bent and adapted over 15 years' to the point where the people who originally built them have long since left. The result is fragmented data, poor visibility across teams and a persistent inability to see a customer or resident's full journey in a single place.

Replacing these systems is genuinely difficult. Business cases are hard to justify, risk tolerance is often low, procurement processes are notoriously long and the disruption of migration feels too high a price for organisations that are usually stretched.

Multi-party journeys – notably repairs in the housing sector – illustrate how fragmentation occurs at the intersection of systems, teams and behaviours. Even well-designed processes can be undermined by data that doesn't flow in real time, teams that don't communicate across boundaries and individual behaviour that varies from one interaction to the next. This means for a resident chasing a repair, repeated contact and unresolved issues can occur – a cause of genuine harm and distress, not merely inconvenience. It's a huge weight of responsibility for contact centre leaders in the sector.

Silos and Culture

If legacy systems are the visible face of fragmented journeys, internal cultures are the deeper, harder-to-adapt cause. Teams guarding access to their systems, services only delivering their part of a process, or senior leaders making tactical or operational decisions without fully understanding the context of customer contact can all lead to inappropriate journey outcomes. Leaders were candid about how difficult these silos can be to change, and how little technology alone can do if the human and structural barriers remain in place.

One particularly effective intervention described was bringing a senior executive into the contact centre to listen to calls in real time. The immediacy of hearing a resident describe a failure in their own words – their frustration, the impact on their life – cuts through organisational politics in ways that data rarely can.

Equally powerful is the shift in measurement that several leaders are pursuing, moving from average handle time and first-contact resolution towards repeat contact rates and outcome-based metrics, which change the internal conversation about what good service looks like.

David Condon

Head of Public Contact & Service Delivery,
Metropolitan Police

The case for improving customer journeys has no real downside, but you have to make it compellingly. Every part of the organisation has a role in the customer's experience. Make that visible and insist on it. Then focus relentlessly on outcomes rather than activity. Numbers are useful, but outcomes are what matter.

Concerns Relating to AI

Leaders revealed cautious optimism tempered by clear awareness of the risks, when discussing AI. The strongest consensus was around AI as a tool for supporting advisors – faster information retrieval, real-time knowledge surfacing and reduced cognitive load are already making a demonstrable difference in some organisations.

Leaders are less sanguine about customer-facing AI. Public service interactions are disproportionately likely to be in difficult circumstances when customers make contact. When AI cannot answer a question, it becomes another obstacle. Demographic assumptions about AI acceptance also present challenges. Younger residents are not inherently more comfortable with AI – but are often more willing to try different channels in attempts to resolve their issues. Older residents remain sceptical about new technologies and the phone remains vital.

Acceptance varies less by age than by context, urgency and emotional load, and deploying AI without clear governance around consent and accountability is a risk in any tightly regulated environment.



Freda Owusu

Director of Customer Contact Centre,
Sovereign Network Group

We talk about 'total experience'. You cannot deliver excellent customer experiences without excellent colleague experiences. Remove stress and friction for your teams, and they will deliver a better service. The ambition and the challenges we all face as leaders are similar, so reach out to each other and to the community.

Turning the Journey on its Head

A vision of the future is clear for most contact centre leaders, even if the pathway to getting there is less so: a joined-up, human-led service model where customers and residents can reach the right help at the right time, regardless of which team, system or channel they start from.

The organisations making the most visible progress are those that identify specific pain points, fix them in demonstrable ways and use that evidence to build the case for the next step. Repeat contact data was highlighted by leaders as a particularly powerful tool, directly attributable to journey failure and tending to resonate with finance teams in ways that measures such as NPS (Net Promoter Score) sometimes cannot.

Outside-in journey mapping – involving both customers and frontline colleagues – was cited as one of the most valuable and underused approaches available. Organisations that design processes around their own structures rather than the resident experiences will continue producing fragmented journeys regardless of their technology investment. Frontline employees in particular were described as an underutilised asset. Most of the time they know where friction in the customer journey is and live it every day.

Proactive contact emerged as a significant emerging opportunity also. Rather than waiting for customers to call with problems, the most forward-thinking organisations are using data and trigger-based outreach to get ahead of issues before they arise – reducing inbound volume while simultaneously improving the customer/ resident experience.

In a sector where budget constraints are severe and the pressure to do more with less is relentless, that combination is exactly the kind of case that builds momentum.

Tuning into the Customer Voice

What advice do contact centre leaders give to their peers on connecting fragmented customer journeys?

Debbie Coveney

Head of Customer Service, Royal Borough of Greenwich

Keep coming back to the fundamental question: why are we doing this? The answer has to be to make things genuinely better for our residents. We are public servants. That carries a responsibility to listen continuously – to customers and to frontline teams – and to act on what we hear, not just what the data tells us.

Colin Goodbody

Head of Customer Operations, Bromford Flagship

Keep your purpose front and centre. Customers and colleagues both deserve a service that reflects the values you say you stand for. Use technology where it genuinely helps, and at the right moment in the journey, not just because it's available, but because it makes a real difference to a person's experience.

Sarah Williams

Chief Customer Experience Officer, Westminster City Council

Residents already expect the same quality of service they receive from retail and banking. That bar will only rise. Let research and customer insight lead your strategy, not the instincts of your technology team. The organisations that listen first and build second will stay ahead of that curve.

Annette Pearson

Head of Customer Experience, NHS Property Services

Walk in your customers' shoes before you design anything. The outside-in view is invaluable – but so is the view from your frontline colleagues. They know where the friction is. They live it every day. Empower them to call it out and make changes, and you'll find the pace of improvement accelerates.

Phil Quickenden

Head of Customer & Registrations Services, Camden Council

Silos are everywhere, but fragmented journeys are the visible result. Stay tuned into the customer voice and be honest about what your data is telling you. When you listen carefully to what your customers, clients, residents are actually experiencing, you find the places where your organisation might be letting them down and can start to resolve issues.

Lisa Lewis

Director of Customer Enablement, NHS Professionals

Repeat callers are one of the most valuable and underused sources of insight available. Every repeat contact is a signal that something in the journey failed. Measure them, analyse them and act on what they tell you. The cost of repeat contact is significant – and the learning from it is often hiding in plain sight.

John Murphy

Head of Customer Experience, NHS Shared Business Services

Omnichannel visibility is a genuine game-changer. When you can see the whole journey – across channels, teams and touchpoints – you can understand where it breaks down and where value is lost. Without that visibility, you're managing fragments rather than experiences.

Dan Allen

Deputy Director Landlord Support, National Residential Landlords Association

Win small and win often. Change processes bit by bit and build on each success. The bigger transformations will come, but they are built on a foundation of incremental improvement. Don't let the scale of the challenge stop you making a start.

Sabina Onwuka

Head of Customer Services, London Borough of Barking & Dagenham

Don't wait to be invited to the table, create your own. Start with small wins and use them to demonstrate progress. When you can show that something has improved, it becomes much easier to bring others on board. You challenge more effectively when your performance speaks for itself.

Alex Nagle

Customer Services Director, Vivid Homes

Start from the outside in. It sounds obvious, but how many service designs still begin with organisational convenience rather than resident need? Put yourself genuinely in their shoes first, then work backwards. And don't try to fix everything at once, focus on the areas that make the biggest difference and build from there.



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