

COUNTY COUNCIL STATEMENT
FOR COUNTY COUNCILLOR CHRIS METCALFE
ACCESS TO SERVICES

The Council continues to develop its approach to increasing accessibility services. At the forefront of this is the Council's Customer Service Centre which is the main focal point for telephone calls into the County Council. The centre operates as a switchboard for the whole of the County Council. In addition the centre has for a number of months now been resolving highways enquiries that would previously have been made to individual depots and helping to resolve other enquiries of a general nature.

Since the 3 September 2007 the Customer Service Centre has been dealing with all telephone enquiries that would previously have been made to the Adult Services Customer Relations Units. These calls cover a range of adult and children's social care issues. A specialist team has been recruited from existing CRU staff to operate within the Customer Service Centre. The centre offers extended opening hours from 8.00 am through to 8.00 pm on a week day as well as opening from 9.00 am through to 5.00 pm on a Saturday. Staff from the Customer Service Centre are working closely with managers from Adult Services to ensure that this new method of service provision operates smoothly and provides a high quality service to customers. Early indications are that the increased accessibility provided by the customer service centre has led to an increase in social care related calls by approximately 25%. This increase in demand in itself presents challenges in terms of capacity however it also indicates the demand that exists for a more accessible service.

In the month of September alone the Customer Service Centre responded to approximately 36,000 calls with an average response time of around nine seconds.

One of the difficulties that the Customer Service Centre has experienced is the major changes that have been taking place to the Council's telephone infrastructure. This has led to some difficulties for some customers in contacting the Council whilst this work has been ongoing. These problems are not related to the development of the Customer Service Centre.

In conjunction with the Customer Service Centre face to face advice is being provided in joint customer access centres that are being developed in conjunction with district partners. The County Council has a target to develop 34 access points across the county and work continues to realise this target.