More calls, less waiting

Newcastle City Council"s call centre was under pressure. FourNet helped rework everything—better routing, real-time data, smarter planning. Calls doubled, wait times halved, and complaints dropped. A system rethink made things better for staff and residents alike. Change came from asking better questions.

Newcastle City Council knew their contact centre was under pressure. Calls were taking too long to answer, complaints were rising, and staff were under pressure. They weren't just getting more calls; they were handling longer and more complex questions from residents in tough situations. Something had to change.

That's where **FourNet** came in. Newcastle City Council had originally approached them with a simple request: a quote for new technology to help manage wait times. But FourNet asked a different question—what problem are we really trying to solve? Rather than rushing into a solution, they suggested taking a step back and looking at the bigger picture.

Together, they ran a deep-dive diagnostic into how the contact centre was operating. It quickly became clear that technology alone wouldn't fix the issue. Call abandonment rates were high. Agents were spending less than half their time speaking to customers. And the system in place was not making the best use of the team's time. Instead of just adding more tools, they needed to rethink how the centre worked from the ground up.

The first step was improving efficiency. That meant understanding the gaps—where time was being lost and what was driving the long wait times. FourNet launched new reporting tools to track productivity. They also revamped the call routing strategy, previously all calls went to the same group of agents. Quick questions, like asking about opening hours, mixed with urgent social service requests. This caused delays. Separating these calls lets the team manage simpler ones faster. This frees up agents for more complex conversations.

Next, they focused on giving the team better visibility. Managers needed real-time data to see what was happening and where resources were being used. FourNet worked closely with them, not just setting up systems but ensuring the team knew how to use them. They also introduced structured planning. They built forecasting models to predict demand and adjusted staffing as needed.

The results speak for themselves. In just a few months, the contact centre went from handling 5,000 calls a week to over 10,000—without adding any extra staff. The average wait time dropped by 10 minutes per call, saving residents a total of 100,000 hours a year. Abandonment rates fell from 54% to just 15%, and the knock-on effect was huge. Agents were under less pressure, making it a better place to work. Sickness rates halved, and complaints went down. The improvements were so significant that even the CEO, who used to get bi-weekly updates on wait times, no longer needed them.

It wasn't always easy. Change is difficult, and there were moments when the team questioned whether the new approach would work. FourNet and Newcastle City Council worked together on challenges. Instead of pushing through blindly, they adjusted as needed. It was never about one company delivering a solution—it was about both teams learning, adapting, and making decisions side by side.

The most important takeaway from this partnership? Fixing a problem isn't always about throwing new technology at it. It's about seeing what's going wrong, being open to new ways of working, and creating solutions that truly meet users' needs. Newcastle City Council worked with FourNet to rethink how they served their residents. Now, they're not just keeping up with demand—they're in a position to look ahead, exploring how AI and automation can take them even further.

For any organisation facing similar challenges, the lesson is clear. Be open. Ask questions. Work with people who challenge your assumptions rather than just selling you a quick fix. Because when both sides are truly invested, that's when real transformation happens.

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