

Cabinet

12 July 2023

Review of Customer Access Point Service Offer



Key Decision No. CORP/R/23/06

Report of Corporate Management Team

Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources

Councillor Susan McDonnell, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Customer Services

Electoral division(s) affected:

Barnard Castle East, Chester-le-Street East, Delves Lane Division, Tanfield Division. (Barnard Castle, Chester-Le-Street, Consett, Stanley).

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To outline proposals to consider adjustment to the face-to-face service offer in four of our least used Customer Access points (CAPs) considering reduced demand and in line with preserving channel choice.
- 2 The report sets out the consultation and equalities impact assessment (EIA) on the proposals, which are linked to the achievement of savings targets included in MTFP(13).

Executive summary

- 3 Changes in both working practices and customer behaviour have resulted in a reduction in demand for face-to-face customer service provision and an increase in demand across alternative customer service pathways.
- 4 Customer Services staff now use multiple channels to meet service demand including telephony, which remains the most popular channel, email, webchat, social media, and face to face. More recently, an Artificial Intelligence based "Chatbot" has been successfully introduced to complement these channels.

- 5 A demand led offer proposing the implementation of reduced opening times across four Customer Access Points (CAPs) that encounter the least footfall, to create efficiencies in the current operating model without the closure of any of our current CAP locations, was put forward as part of the medium-term financial plan (MTFP) 13 savings proposals.
- 6 The aim of this approach is to maintain channel choice for customers balanced against the need to provide an efficient, value for money service that maximises use of resource and allows reinvestment of resource into other contact channels where demand is increasing.
- 7 Estimated savings of £137k were included in MTFP13 aligned to a proposed change in service offer, with an implementation of the adjusted service offer to be achieved by 1 October 2023.
- 8 It is anticipated that the MTFP savings will be made by the reduction of four Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Customer Services Officer posts, which can be achieved by the deletion of vacant posts. There is also an ERVR expression of interest within the service at management level which can be supported.
- 9 A public consultation was carried out between 22 January 2023 and 6 March 2023 with 396 respondents, a low level of participation but reflective of our decline in footfall.
- 10 The resident feedback from this consultation and a review of demand data across the financial year 2022/23 has led to adjustments to the proposed opening days for these four CAPs, although the number of days provision proposed to be available has not been adjusted.
- 11 A full EIA was carried out and it is recognised that older age groups, over the age of 65 years and people with disabilities are more likely to access face to face provision at CAPs and this is reflected in the percentage of consultation respondents from those groups.
- 12 Although there is a potential disproportionate impact in terms of older age and disability in terms of reducing opening days at the four CAPs, provision will remain open on the days most used currently by these residents.
- 13 Appointments will remain available as will alternative customer access channels including telephone, email, social media and webchat.
- 14 Whilst most respondents wanted CAPs to be available five days a week, on balance the proposed adjustment remains the most appropriate option for our residents, the organisation, and the service.

- 15 The proposals will allow for resource to be realigned to telephony, email, social media, and webchat support, all of which have seen a substantial increase in demand since the pandemic, thus benefitting all customers accessing support via these channels.
- 16 Reasonable adjustments will continue to be made where necessary for customers with a disability, and language support for customers whose first language is not English.
- 17 Communication and engagement activity to support the changes and promote different customer service access channels will be rolled out in advance of proposals being implemented in a number of ways including but not limited to information on the DCC website, member and partner briefings, social media communications, posters in CAPs.
- 18 It is anticipated that a reduction of four Full Time Equivalent (FTE) will be managed through the deletion of vacant posts and one ER/VR therefore there is no specific equality impact and formal staff consultation is not required.
- 19 The full Equalities Impact Assessment can be found at Appendix 4.

Recommendation(s)

- 20 Cabinet are recommended to:
 - (a) Note the content of the report and the information contained within; and
 - (b) Approve the proposed demand led adjustment to service offer across Barnard Castle, Chester le Street, Consett and Stanley CAPs with effect from 1 October 2023.

Background

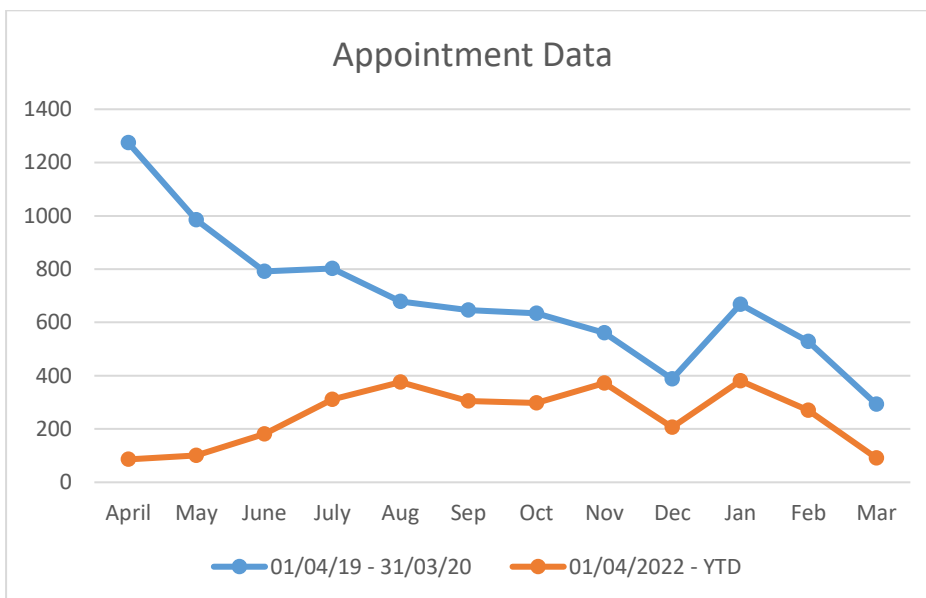
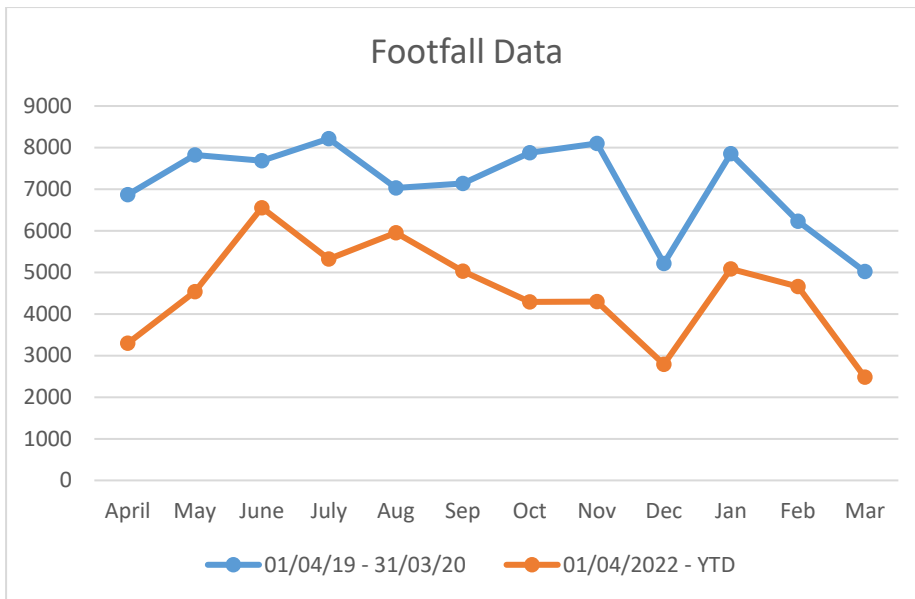
- 21 Our customers can contact us in several ways to get help and information about our council services including telephone, online, self-serve, web chat and face to face through our CAPs.
- 22 CAP footfall and appointment take-up has decreased year upon year indicating that the current model and our CAP locations are ceasing to meet the needs of residents.
- 23 Subsequently, all our Customer Service Officers (CSOs) and Assistants (CSAs) are required to work across multiple channels to meet service demand.
- 24 There are currently 8 CAPs across the county located in Barnard Castle, Stanley, Seaham, Spennymoor, Durham City, Crook, Chester-Le-Street and Consett. In addition, the service also resources a reception/meet and greet facility at County Hall. Current opening times for all CAPs can be found at appendix 3.
- 25 In line with COVID-19 restrictions and the capability for services to be delivered via a range of alternative contact channels, all CAPs closed between 27 March 2020 and 1 April 2022 except for a brief period between 29 September 2021 and 13 December 2021.
- 26 Since reopening in April 2022, following this period of closure, footfall and appointment demand has dropped in comparison to that which was seen pre pandemic – largely as a result of a significant e-enabling / digitisation programme that was required whilst access was restricted.
- 27 The changes we have seen in how people access support, combined with the need to make savings, required us to review our services to ensure we have adequate resource to meet demand across all channels and are using our resources as responsibly as possible and maintain services that matter to our residents, particularly those who are the most vulnerable.
- 28 This review led to a proposed reduction in opening hours across four of our least used CAPs, namely Barnard Castle, Stanley, Consett and Chester Le Street.
- 29 Savings of £137k were included in MTFP13 aligned to this proposed change, with implementation of the new service offer to be effective from 1 October 2023.
- 30 Suggested opening days based on customer demand were drafted using data available at that time. These, along with the current opening times for the impacted CAPs can be seen in the table below.

	Current Opening Hours	Proposed New Opening Hours
Barnard Castle	Monday to Wednesday 10am – 5pm, Thursday Closed, Friday 10am – 4.30pm	Monday 10am - 5pm, Tuesday to Thursday Closed, Friday 10am – 4.30pm
Chester-le-Street	Monday to Friday 9am – 4pm	Monday Closed, Tuesday to Thursday 8.30am - 5pm, Friday Closed
Consett	Monday to Thursday 8.30am – 5pm, Friday 8.30am – 4.30pm	Monday Closed, Tuesday 8.30am - 5pm, Wednesday Closed, Thursday 8.30am - 5pm, Friday 8.30am – 4.30pm
Stanley	Monday to Thursday 8.30am – 5pm, Friday 8.30am – 4.30pm	Monday to Wednesday 8.30am - 5pm, Thursday and Friday Closed

- 31 Reducing the number of days the above-mentioned CAPs are open, rather than offering daily opening across a shorter number of hours, releases significantly more staffing capacity, allows more effective resourcing against demand, and increases resilience across the service by allowing the CSOs/CSAs in those CAPs to be utilised entirely on closure days in supporting telephony, email and online service requests.

Changing Demand

- 32 Over recent years we have seen a change in the way customers contact us and there has been a gradual move away from face-to-face services, now over 90% of residents contact us by phone, email or online.
- 33 This gradual decline in face-to-face demand has taken a steeper drop since reinstatement of the face-to-face customer service offer following the period closure during the pandemic.
- 34 As can be seen in the graphs below footfall and appointment data for the financial years 2019/20 and 2022/23 identifies a 64% drop in demand for face-to-face customer service.

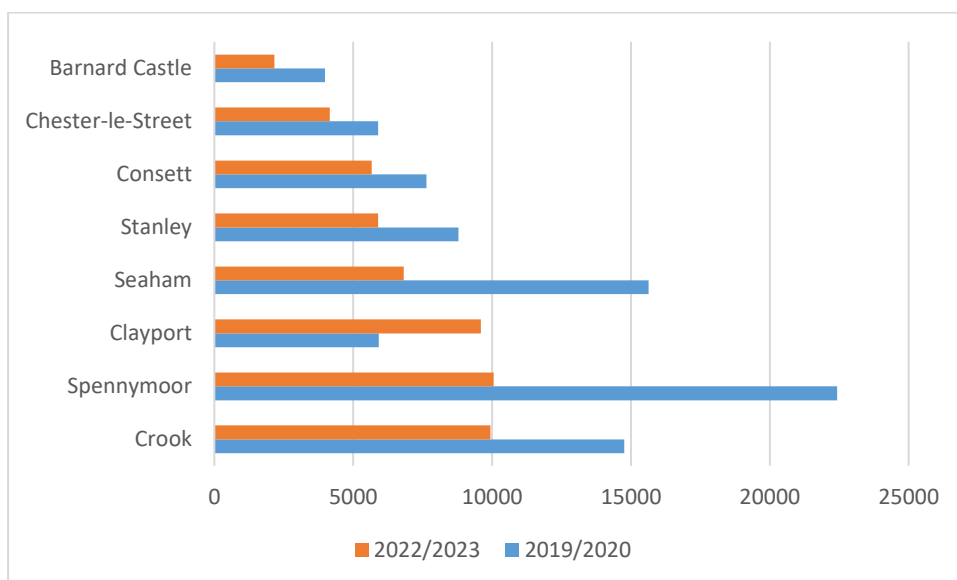


- 35 It should be noted that whilst the customer service offer is consistent within each CAP it is currently the role of the customer service team to provide reception cover for each of the buildings in which a CAP is located.

- 36 The demand for reception support is driven by other functionality within the building and directly impacts the footfall statistics. Over the whole CAP estate non-customer service related footfall represents 60% of the total demand handled by the team.

- 37 The demand for non-customer service activity compared with customer service activity for each CAP for the financial year 2022/23 can be seen at Appendix 5.

- 38 As demand for face-to-face customer service declines, we are seeing increasing demand across the other channels staffed by corporate customer service as customer channel choice shifts.
- 39 Contact into customer service via telephony increased by 8%, email by 43%, social media by 35% and webchat by 100% in 2022/23 compared to 2019/20 equating to over 99k additional contacts coming in through these channels further supporting the need for us to review our service offer to ensure we are moving our resource to match changes in customer channel choice.
- 40 Reviewing footfall data by CAP location highlights variability of demand across the estate and identifies Barnard Castle, Stanley, Consett and Chester le Street as our least used locations in the last financial year as can be seen in the graph below.



- 41 The proposed changes to the face-to-face offer would release sufficient capacity to realise the proposed savings in addition to unlocking capacity to reinvest into supporting service delivery on other channels.

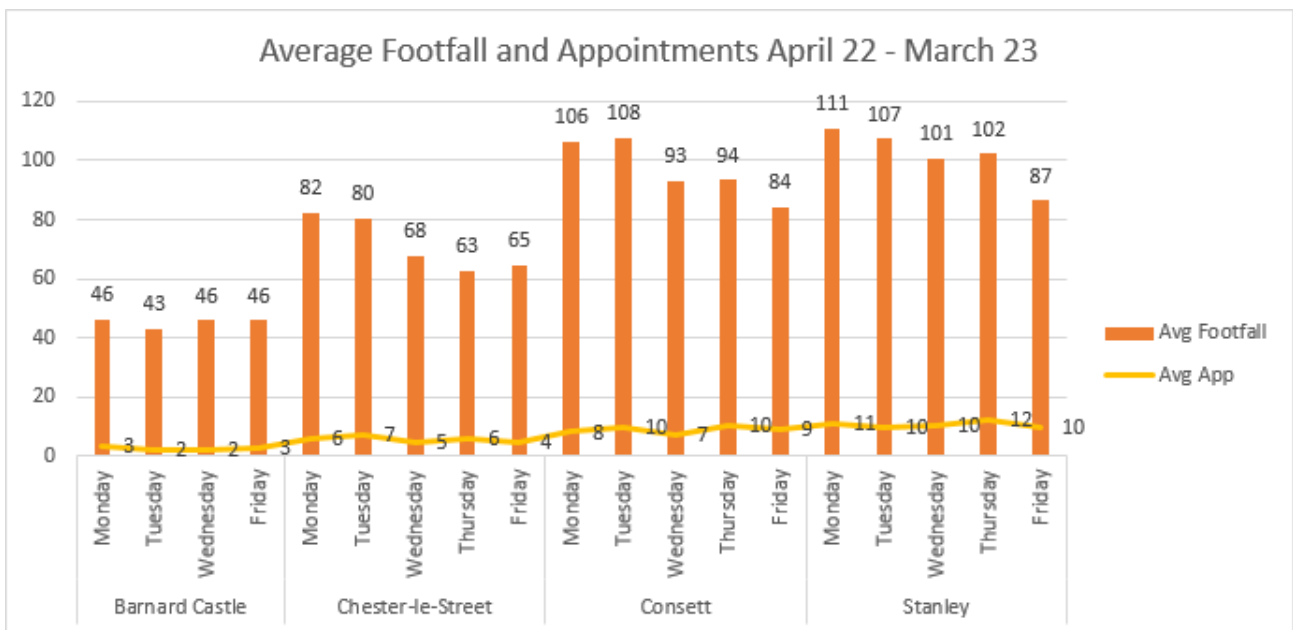
Consultation

- 42 The review identified the requirement to gather information from customers across the county to further understand the impact of the proposed reduction in opening hours and to consider any required changes to the proposals because of this customer feedback.
- 43 A public consultation was carried out between 22 January 2023 and 6 March 2023 to understand the impact on our customers should we

proceed with the adjustment to the current service offer, the survey questionnaire can be found at Appendix 2.

- 44 The survey was made available online and paper copies were available in all CAP locations and libraries.
- 45 The survey asked customers to tell us
 - (a) why they prefer to travel to CAPs;
 - (b) whether we are offering the right services from these CAPs and in the right location; and
 - (c) what they thought about our proposals to reduce opening hours in four of our least used CAPs
- 46 Promotion of the consultation included
 - (a) Information on the Durham County Council website
 - (b) Adding a link to the survey on email and webchat responses during the period
 - (c) Bulk email and text messages to 740 recent visitors to CAP
 - (d) A press release in Durham County News
 - (e) Members briefing
 - (f) Partner briefings including libraries, AAPs and housing associations.
 - (g) Social media communications
- 47 The approach enabled the council to engage with 396 people who provided their views. Feedback was received across the protected groups; however, the results only equate to 0.07% of the population for the County.
- 48 More women (60.1%) than men responded to the survey. In terms of age, 53.2% of respondents were over the age of 65. 37.5% considered themselves disabled.
- 49 Those who responded to religious belief were 73% Christian, 24.9% no belief and 1.6% as either Buddhist, Pagan, Humanist or Spiritualist.
- 50 Impact from an equality's perspective recognised that older age groups, over the age of 65 years and people with disabilities are more likely to access face to face provision at CAPs and this is reflected in the percentage of consultation respondents from those groups.

- 51 Although there is a disproportionate impact in terms of older age and disability in terms of reducing opening days at the 4 CAPs, provision will remain open on the days most used by these residents.
- 52 Appointments will remain available as will alternative customer access channels including telephone, email, social media, and webchat.
- 53 The proposals will allow for greater resource to move to telephony, email, social media and webchat support which has seen a substantial increase since the pandemic, benefitting all customers accessing via these channels.
- 54 Reasonable adjustments will continue to be made where necessary for customers with a disability, and language support will remain available for customers whose first language is not English.
- 55 Effective communication to explain the changes and promote different customer service access channels will be rolled out if proposals are implemented.
- 56 In addition to the equalities impact we received several comments from Barnard Castle residents highlighting Wednesday opening was more convenient due to them visiting the local Market on this day and that additional transport options were available on Wednesdays.
- 57 Furthermore, a full financial year's data for footfall and appointment demand for 2022/23 was reviewed. This data can be seen in the graph below.



58 The consultation feedback and above demand data have led to adjustments to the proposed opening days for these four CAPs although the number of days provision is proposed to be available has not been adjusted.

59 These adjusted days can be seen in the table below.

	Proposed Opening Hours
Barnard Castle	Monday to Tuesday Closed. Wednesday 10am - 5pm Thursday Closed, Friday 10am – 4.30pm
Chester-le-Street	Monday to Tuesday 8.30am - 5pm Wednesday to Thursday Closed, Friday 8.30am – 4.30pm
Consett	Monday to Tuesday 8.30am - 5pm, Wednesday Closed, Thursday 8.30am - 5pm, Friday Closed
Stanley	Monday to Tuesday 8.30am - 5pm, Wednesday Closed, Thursday 8.30am - 5pm, Friday Closed

60 Whilst data shows that demand in Barnard Castle CAP has little variability across the week, feedback from the consultation was very strongly against closure of the CAP on a Wednesday therefore this has been adjusted. Barnard Castle proposal will now incorporate a Monday closure and will be open Wednesday. Tuesday will remain as originally proposed as this continued throughout the year to be the least popular day.

61 Chester le Street residents had no specific feedback on the days that were initially proposed for closure, the last financial year's demand data suggested Monday to Wednesday as the most appropriate days to open. However further consultation with local members adjusted the proposed opening days to Monday, Tuesday and Friday.

62 Consett residents had no specific feedback on the days that were initially proposed for closure however the last financial years demand data identifies Monday as busier than Friday therefore this has been adjusted. Consett will now incorporate a Friday closure and will be open Monday, Wednesday will remain as originally proposed as this continued throughout the year to be the least popular day 2nd to Friday.

63 Stanley residents had no specific feedback on the days that were initially proposed for closure however the last financial years demand data identifies Thursday as marginally busier than Wednesday, therefore this has been adjusted. Stanley will now incorporate a Wednesday closure and will be open Thursday, Friday will remain as

originally proposed as this continued throughout the year to be the least popular day.

Staffing impact

- 64 All CSOs and CSAs assigned to the CAP are already required to work across multiple channels to meet service demand and in addition to CAP activity provide scheduled telephony, email, webchat, and Quality assurance support to the wider service.
- 65 The opportunity to adopt hybrid ways of working will be given to affected employees, where they may undertake working from home on the days their CAP will be closed. Alternatives will be available for those who do not wish to work from home.
- 66 Expected savings will be achieved via deletion of vacant posts and a change in the ways of working for the remaining staff.
- 67 The substantive base of any of the affected employees will not change, therefore there is no requirement for formal consultation, however, discussions will be held to provide employees opportunity to raise any issues or concerns.

Conclusion

- 68 To make savings, maintain all current contact channels and meet increasing demand across telephony and digital channels it is essential that the face-to-face service offer is kept under review and adapted from that which it is currently.
- 69 Inability to adjust the face-to-face offer to reflect the decreasing demand will result in inability to meet MTFP 13 savings goals aligned to customer services and perpetuate an inefficient service delivery model.
- 70 Engagement with key stakeholders including local elected members was carried out in advance of public consultation and is planned to continue throughout the decision-making process.

Background papers

- Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 to 2026/27 and Revenue and Capital Budget 2023/24 – County Council 22 February 2023

Other useful documents

- None

Author(s)

Sarah Welsh

Tel: 07768994343

Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Not applicable.

Finance

MTFP 13 Savings aligned to this change in service offer are outlined below.

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	Total
Savings Proposal (£)	£68,500	£68,500	0	0	£137,000

Redundancy costs due to staffing reductions that can be realised through this change in offer need to be considered although the service have minimised this to just 1 post and intend to use vacancies for the remainder. The redundancy cost associated will be financed from the Corporate ER/VR Earmarked Reserve.

Consultation

A communications plan incorporating member, staff and key stakeholder engagement is in place covering in addition to broader communication and engagement planning for service users.

It is anticipated that a reduction of four Full Time Equivalent (FTE) will be managed through the deletion of vacant posts and one ER/VR therefore there is no specific equality impact and formal staff consultation is not required.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

A full Equalities Impact Assessment is attached detailing potential impacts (both positive and negative) in relation to the protected characteristics. The assessment has been updated throughout and following the consultation to assess the impact of the proposed changes on the protected characteristic groups and to identify and evaluate any mitigations.

Participation

The approach enabled the council to engage with 396 people who provided their views. Feedback was received across the protected groups; however, the results only equate to 0.07% of the population for the County.

The survey was promoted via social media, DCC website, email and text messages to recent visitors to Customer Access Points (CAPs) and by staff in the CAPs

More women (60.1%) than men responded to the survey.

In terms of age, 53.2% of respondents were over the age of 65. 37.5% considered themselves disabled.

Those who responded to religious belief were 73% Christian, 24.9% no belief and 1.6% as either Buddhist, Pagan, Humanist or Spiritualist.

Further detail contained in the tables below

Are you:

	Frequency	Percent
Male	139	39.6%
Female	211	60.1%
Non-binary	1	0.3%
Total	351	100.0%

What is your age?

	Frequency	Percent
18-24	6	1.7%
25-34	14	4.0%
35-44	26	7.4%
45-54	43	12.2%
55-64	76	21.6%
65-74	122	34.7%
75+	65	18.5%
Total	352	100.0%

Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	127	37.5
No	212	62.5%
Total	339	100.0%

What is your religion or belief?

	Frequency	Percent
Christian	218	73.4%
Buddhist	1	0.3%
None	74	24.9%
Humanist	1	0.3%
Pagan	1	0.3%
Spiritualist	2	0.7%
Total	297	100.0%

What is your ethnicity?

	Frequency	Percent
White British	301	98.7%
White Non-British	3	1.0%
Black or Black British	1	0.3%
Total	305	100.0%

How would you describe your sexual orientation?

	Frequency	Percent
Heterosexual/ straight	281	98.9%
Gay or lesbian	1	0.4%
Bisexual	2	0.7%
Total	284	100.0%

The Consultation Responses Method were via PC (including Self-service PC in Access Points) 281, Mobile 43 and Tablet 10.

The table below shows a breakdown of the number of responses from each CAP

	Frequency	Percent
Barnard Castle	108	27.6%
Chester-Le-Street	36	9.2%
Consett	24	6.1%
Crook	56	14.3%
Durham City (Clayport)	40	10.2%
Durham City (County Hall)	5	1.3%
Seaham	19	4.8%
Spennymoor	54	13.8%
Stanley	50	12.8%
Total	392	100.0%

In the CAPs surveyed where no changes are to be made the response to the questions were positive with 95.3% agreeing that the CAP was in the right location.

In CAPs where the changes are proposed the response to the questions received the most negative responses.

Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to alter the opening hours of the Customer Access Point you are commenting upon?

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	9	4.2%
Agree	7	3.3%
Neither agree nor disagree	21	9.8%

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	56	26.0%
Strongly disagree	122	56.7%
Total	215	100.0%

If the opening hours were to be altered as proposed, do you feel there will be a positive or negative effect upon you, your business or your organisation?

	Frequency	Percent
Extremely positive	1	0.5%
Positive	5	2.3%
Neither positive nor negative	32	15.0%
Negative	91	42.7%
Extremely negative	84	39.4%
Total	213	100.0%

Overall, the response to the consultation survey was low, however this is reflective of how the demand for face to face has declined.

Climate Change

The shifting of channels from face to face to telephony and digital reduces the need for both customers and staff to travel supporting the climate change agenda through reduced emissions.

Human Rights

Not applicable.

Crime and Disorder

Not applicable.

Staffing

The change in service offer will release capacity to remove posts within the service leading to the deletion of 1x CAP Coordinator post (Grade 11) and 4x Customer Service Assistant (CSA) posts (Grade 4).

Accommodation

Barnard Castle and Crook CAPs co-locate with the library, reduction in the CAP offer will not impact the library offer, the libraries are managed by library staff and are not co-delivered via CAP staff.

Stanley and Consett are standalone CAPs, Chester-Le-Street CAP is delivered from within a Karbon building although there is no co-delivered offer, liaison with Karbon facilities management will be required to ensure effective transition.

Risk

There is risk of redundancy although this will be limited to the CAP Co Ordinator post with removal of 4 CSA posts to be released from vacancies.

Building costs will remain.

The face-to-face offer provides support, advice and assistance to those customers needing more intensive support due to their circumstances and challenges in relation to accessing alternative channels. Although footfall has reduced because of digital shift/changes in behavior, this channel is seen as a strong local presence, offering Council services in a very accessible way. CAPs have been open Monday to Friday during “normal” office hours since LGR – providing a reduced offer may cause confusion and reputational damage as more vulnerable customers attempt to attend for support to find the service unavailable.

Overall resilience of the customer service team will be impacted. The CAP team are used to provide additional support when needed for the other channels particularly when there is increased demand, flexibility to use this resource will be reduced with the removal of 4 CSA posts.

Procurement

Not applicable.

Appendix 2: Public consultation survey questions

Alteration to Customer Access Point opening hours

About your Customer Access Point

It is proposed to alter the opening times of the Customer Access Points at Barnard Castle, Chester-Le-Street, Consett and Stanley.

Q1 Which Customer Access Point (CAP) are you commenting upon?

Barnard Castle

Chester-le-Street

Consett

Stanley

Q2, Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to alter the opening hours of the Customer Access Point you are commenting upon?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

If you disagree with the proposal to make the required savings by altering the opening hours, what suitable alternative would you propose?

Q3 If the opening hours were to be altered as proposed, do you feel there will be a positive or negative effect upon you, your business or your organisation?

Extremely positive

Positive

Neither positive nor negative

Negative

Extremely negative

Q4, Do you have any further comments to make about the proposed changes to opening hours?

About you

Q5 Are you responding to this proposal as: Please select which best applies.

A user of the Customer Access Point

A local resident

A visitor to the area

A local employee

A business, club or organisation Other

If other or a club, business or organisation, please specify.

Q6 What is your postcode?

This information will only be used to better understand the locations of respondents.

If you are responding as a club, business or organisation the survey is now complete.

Otherwise, please continue.

About you

Our aim is to involve as many people as possible in local decision making and, as such, we would like to make sure everyone has the opportunity to become involved. If you could answer a few questions about yourself, it will help us to monitor our performance.

These questions are entirely optional.

Q7 Are you:

Male

Female

Prefer to self-describe

If prefer to self-describe, please specify.

Q8 What is your age?

Under 18

18-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-64

65-74

75+

Q9, Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person? (This may include any long-standing illness, disability or infirmity which has a substantial effect on your day-to-day life. Long standing means, it has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least a year).

Yes No

Q10 What is your religion or belief?

Christian

Sikh

Buddhist

Muslim

Jewish

Hindu

None

Other

If other, please specify.

Q11 What is your ethnicity?

White British

White Non-British

Asian or Asian British Black or Black British

Arab or Middle Eastern

Mixed Race

Travelling Community

Other

If other, please specify.

Q12 How would you describe your sexual orientation?

Heterosexual/straight

Gay or lesbian

Bisexual

Other

If other, please specify.

Thank you for completing the survey

Appendix 3: Current CAP opening times

CAP	Opening Hours
Barnard Castle	Monday-Wednesday 10am-5pm Thursday closed Friday 10am-4.30pm
Chester-le-Street	Monday-Friday 9am-4pm
Consett	Monday-Thursday 8.30am-5pm Friday 8.30am-4.30pm
Stanley	Monday-Thursday 8.30am-5pm Friday 8.30am-4.30pm

Appendix 4: Equalities Impact Assessment

Durham County Council Equality Impact Assessment

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) requires Durham County Council to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people from different groups. Completion of this template allows us to provide a written record of our equality analysis and demonstrate due regard. It must be used as part of decision-making processes with relevance to equality.

Please contact equalities@durham.gov.uk for any necessary support.

Section One: Description and Screening

Service/Team or Section	Resources
Lead Officer name and job title	Sarah Welsh. Strategic Manager Customer relations
Subject of the impact assessment	Customer Access Points service offer
Report date (Cabinet/CMT/Mgt team etc)	Management Team 3 rd May RMT 9 th May CMT 17 th May Cabinet 12 th July
MTFP Reference (if relevant)	RES 14 MTFP 13
EIA Start Date	September 2022
EIA Review Date	

Subject of the Impact Assessment

Please give a brief description of the policy, proposal or practice which is the subject of this impact assessment.

The proposal is to review the service provision in relation to the face-to-face service provided by Customer Services from the Customer Access Points (CAPs). There are currently 8 CAPs across the county providing a full range of service access in addition the service also provides a “reception/meet and greet” facility at County Hall.

Footfall across the areas has high variability from 34 customers per week to 302 customers per week indicating that the current model needs to be reviewed to ensure it reflects the demand.

The proposal is to implement a demand led offer reducing the opening hours across the 4 CAPs with the least footfall. The CAPs are located at Barnard Castle, Stanley, Consett, Chester Le Street – resulting in these CAPs having fewer operating days creating efficiencies in the operating model.

Suggested opening days have been drafted, based on highest demand days, implementation would follow consultation therefore opening days could be subject to change. The suggested reduction in opening hours releases the capacity of 4FTE.

The proposal reduces the CAP overall offer by 26% and will mean a 40% reduction in service provision across the 4 lowest demand CAPs.

Who are the main people impacted and/or stakeholders? (e.g., general public, staff, members, specific clients/service users, community representatives):

General public, CAP staff

Screening

Is there any actual or potential negative or positive impact on the following protected characteristics^[1]?

Protected Characteristic	Negative Impact Indicate: Yes, No or Unsure	Positive Impact Indicate: Yes, No or Unsure
Age	Yes	No
Disability	Yes	No
Gender reassignment	No	No

Marriage and civil partnership (only in relation to 'eliminate discrimination')	No	No
Pregnancy and maternity	No	No
Race	No	No
Religion or Belief	No	No
Sex	No	No
Sexual orientation	No	No

Please provide **brief** details of any potential to cause discrimination or negative impact. Record full details and any mitigating actions in section 2 of this assessment.

The proposals in terms of CAP opening hours will mean a change in the current operational provision for the general public accessing service from the 4 CAPS affected. The consultation will seek to gather information on how this will impact current service users so that this feedback can be used to inform future changes and what will need to be put into place to support customer needs. It is important that any changes have an appropriate lead in time and clear communications to ensure customers are aware of the operational opening hours. The changes will be informed by both the existing data on usage and access and also by the feedback provided through the consultation. This will ensure the most effective use of the resource available to support customer needs and to ensure improved access to services

Staff members will be impacted as the changes proposed will release 4 FTE from within the CAP service group and the current management structure, will be reviewed. Change management processes will be followed to ensure staff affected are fully consulted and vacancies used to support redeployment where appropriate

Barnard Castle and Crook co-locate with the library, changes to the CAP opening hours will not impact the library offer, the libraries are managed by library staff and are not co-delivered via CAP staff. Liaison with Library staff will be required to keep informed of any agreed changes.

Chester-Le-Street CAP is delivered from within a Karbon building although there is no co-delivered offer, liaison with Karbon facilities management will be required.

The largest volume of appointment requests dealt with in the CAPs relates to Blue Badge support. A Blue Badge is a benefit awarded to people with a condition that impacts their mobility. Another large proportion of CAP footfall and appointment traffic is related to concessionary Bus Pass application support and queries which can be associated with Age and or disability. This will potentially mean a disproportionate impact on disabled people although a service offer will remain, it

will be restricted in terms of reduced opening hours. The consultation with service users is aimed at identifying what will need to be fully considered/put into place to mitigate any impact.

Please provide **brief** details of positive impact. How will this policy/proposal promote our commitment to our legal responsibilities under the public sector equality duty to:

eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation,
advance equality of opportunity, and

foster good relations between people from different groups?

HR processes will be followed to ensure fair treatment of staff, and ER/VR requests will be progressed where possible.

A review of Customer Access Points will ensure they are open at the right times providing the right services and that opening hours reflect demand. This approach supports a value for money offer which maintains all of the contact channels currently available for customers in addition to ensuring we have resource available to meet increasing demand across our other channels.

Reasonable adjustments in service delivery for people with disabilities (e.g., requirement for a face to face appointment) will continue to be made.

Evidence

What evidence do you have to support your data analysis and any findings?

Please **outline** any data you have and/or proposed sources (e.g., service user or census data, research findings). Highlight any data gaps and say whether or not you propose to carry out consultation. Record your detailed analysis, in relation to the impacted protected characteristics, in section 2 of this assessment.

This proposal is data led and based on demand for appointments and footfall across all CAPs. The data is sourced from within our CRM system, this is the system used to capture data on all footfall traffic into each CAP and all appointment data including location, query or request type and of appointments length of appointment.

Consultation has been carried out the analysis of which is contained in section 2.

Employee Impact

It is anticipated that the reduction of 4 FTE will be managed through the deletion of vacant posts and one ER/VR therefore inclusion of a full staff profile is not necessary as formal staff consultation is not required.

Screening Summary

On the basis of the information provided in this equality impact screening (section 1), are you proceeding to a full impact assessment (sections 2&3 of this template)?	Please confirm (Yes/No) Yes
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Sign Off

Lead officer sign off: S Welsh	Date:8 th September 2022
Equality representative sign off (where required): M C Gallagher	Date: 14 th September 2022

If carrying out a full assessment please proceed to sections two and three.

If not proceeding to full assessment, please ensure your screening record is **attached to any relevant decision-making records or reports**, retain a copy for update where necessary, and forward a copy to equalities@durham.gov.uk

If you are unsure of assessing impact please contact the corporate equalities team for further advice: equalities@durham.gov.uk

Section Two: Data analysis and assessment of impact

Please provide details of impacts for people with different protected characteristics relevant to your screening findings. You need to decide if there is or likely to be a differential impact for some. Highlight the positives e.g. benefits for certain groups and advancement of equality, as well as the negatives e.g. barriers or exclusion of particular groups. Record the evidence you have used to support or explain your conclusions, including any necessary mitigating actions to ensure fair treatment.

Protected Characteristic: Age		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to age?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>The consultation relates to all residents irrespective of age.</p> <p>It is recognised that older age groups are more likely to access face to face provision and this is reflected in the percentage of respondents over the age of 65 years.</p> <p>Older age groups will be disproportionately impacted by proposed reduced days of opening for some CAPs (North and Barnard Castle).</p> <p>The customer access points will remain open on the days most used by these residents.</p> <p>Alternative channels remain available including a pre-booked face to face appointment where appropriate.</p> <p>Proposal to reduce opening days at 3 CAPs in the North and Barnard Castle CAP will allow for more resource to move to phone support which has seen a substantial uptick since the pandemic, this is beneficial to all customers accessing this channel.</p>	<p>LG Inform</p> <p>Of the 522,100 people in Durham 296,892 are between the ages of 20-64 and 111,338 are 65 and over</p> <p>The consultation produced 396 responses which is 0.07% of the population</p> <p>Of those 53.2% were over 65s This age group were more likely to strongly/disagree with reduced opening days and say this would have a strong negative impact as compared to younger consultation respondents.</p>	<p>Effective communications to explain changes and promote different customer service access channels.</p>

Protected Characteristic: **Disability**

What is the actual or potential impact in relation to disability?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>The consultation relates to all residents</p> <p>It is recognised that people with disabilities are more likely to access face to face provision and this is reflected in the percentage of disabled respondents.</p> <p>Disabled people will be disproportionately impacted by proposed reduced days of opening for some CAPs (North and Barnard Castle).</p> <p>The customer access points will remain open on the days most used by these residents.</p> <p>Alternative channels remain available including a booked face to face appointment where appropriate. Reasonable adjustments will be actioned where necessary.</p> <p>Proposal to reduce opening days at 3 CAPs in the North and Barnard Castle CAP will allow for more resource to move to phone support which has seen a substantial uptick since the pandemic, this is beneficial to all customers accessing this channel.</p>	<p>Of the 396 responses to the consultation 37.5 considered themselves disabled</p> <p>Disabled respondents were more likely to strongly/disagree with reduced opening days and say this would have a strong negative impact as compared to non-disabled consultation respondents.</p>	<p>Effective communications to explain changes and promote different customer service access channels.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will be made where necessary</p>

Protected Characteristic: **Gender reassignment**

What is the actual or potential impact in relation to gender reassignment?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?
It is not anticipated that the proposals will differentially impact trans people.		N/A

Protected Characteristic: Marriage and civil partnership (only in relation to 'eliminate discrimination')		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to marriage and civil partnership?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?
It is not anticipated that the proposals will differentially impact on the grounds of marriage and civil partnership		N/A

Protected Characteristic: Pregnancy and maternity		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to pregnancy and maternity?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?
It is not anticipated that the proposals will differentially impact on the grounds of pregnancy and maternity.		N/A

Protected Characteristic: Race		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to race?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?
Where first language is not English, written communication e.g. email	Of the 305 residents who replied to this question 301 identified as white British	Effective communications to explain changes and promote different customer

<p>and Do it online, is a barrier for some. Access to telephone channels can be more useful as spoken language can be easier for some where their first language is not English.</p> <p>Language support including interpretation and translation is available where necessary.</p>		<p>service access channels.</p>
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Protected Characteristic: Religion or belief		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to religion or belief?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>It is not anticipated that the proposals will differentially impact on the grounds of religion or belief</p>	<p>Religion/belief of respondents was:</p> <p>Christian 73.4%, None 24.9%, Other 1.7%</p>	<p>N/A</p>

Protected Characteristic: Sex		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to sex?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>It is not anticipated that the proposals will differentially impact on the grounds of sex</p>	<p>60.1% of consultation respondents were female.</p> <p>Agreement/disagreement with proposals was broadly comparable between male and female consultation respondents with most not wanting a reduction in face to face service.</p> <p>Men were more likely than women to state proposals</p>	<p>N/A</p>

	would have an extreme negative impact (of consultation respondents).	
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Protected Characteristic: Sexual orientation		
What is the actual or potential impact in relation to sexual orientation?	Record of evidence which supports and/or explains your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?
It is not anticipated that the proposals will differentially impact people on the grounds of their sexual orientation.	Sexual orientation of respondents was: LGB: 1.1%, heterosexual 98.9%	N/A

Section Three: Conclusion and Review

Summary

<p>Please provide a brief summary of your findings; a summary of any positive and/or negative impacts across the protected characteristics, links to the involvement of different groups and/or public consultation, mitigations and conclusions made.</p>
<p>It is recognised that older age groups, over the age of 65 years and people with disabilities are more likely to access face to face provision at Customer Access Points and this is reflected in the percentage of consultation respondents from those groups. Although there is a disproportionate impact in terms of older age and disability in terms of reducing opening days a 4 CAPs, provision will remain open on the days most used by these residents. Pre-booked face to face appointments will also remain available as will alternative customer access channels such as telephone. Proposals will allow for greater resource to move to phone support which has seen a substantial uptake since the pandemic, which is beneficial to all customers accessing this channel.</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments will be made where necessary for customers with a disability, also language support for customers whose first language is not English.</p> <p>Effective communications to explain the changes and promote different customer service access channels will be necessary if proposals are implemented.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the reduction of 4 FTE will be managed through the deletion of vacant posts and one ER/VR therefore formal staff consultation is not required.</p>

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Will this promote positive relationships between different communities? If so how?

None identified

Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescales for implementation	In which plan will the action appear?
Effective communications to explain changes and promote different customer service access channels.	Cust services		

Review and connected assessments

Are there any additional or connected equality impact assessments that need to be undertaken? (If yes, provide details)	<u>No</u>
When will this assessment be reviewed? Please also insert this date at the front of the template	

Sign Off

Lead officer sign off: S Welsh	Date: 13 April 2023
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Equality representative sign off (where required): M C Gallagher	Date: 13 April 2023
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Please ensure:

The findings of this EIA are carefully considered and used to inform any related decisions and policy development

A summary of findings is included within the body of any relevant reports or decision-making records

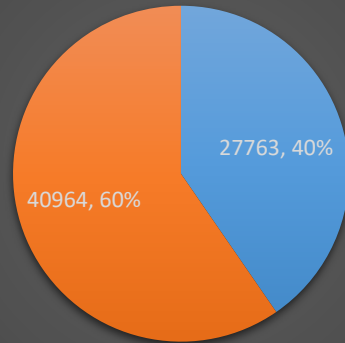
The EIA is attached to reports or relevant decision-making records and the report Implications Appendix 1 is noted that an EIA has been undertaken

Please retain a copy for review and update where necessary, and forward a copy to equalities@durham.gov.uk

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics>

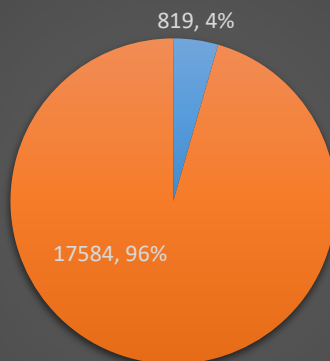
Appendix 5:

CAP Estate in full - Footfall Contact



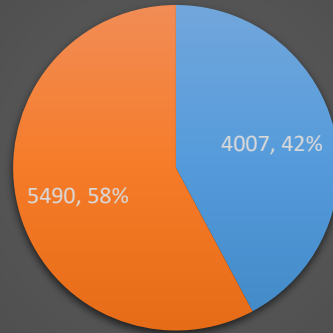
■ CS/CAP Related ■ Non CS Related

County Hall Footfall



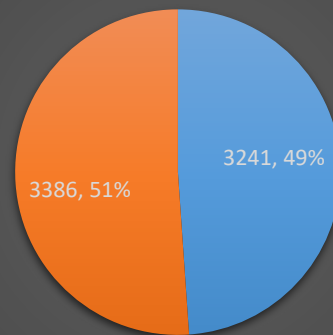
■ CS/CAP Related ■ Non CS Related

Durham City (Clayport) Footfall



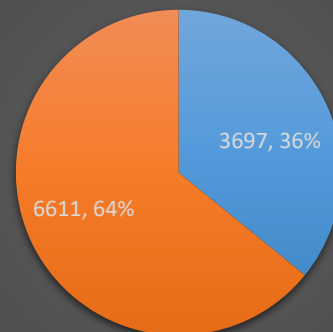
■ CS/CAP Related ■ Non CS Related

Seaham Footfall



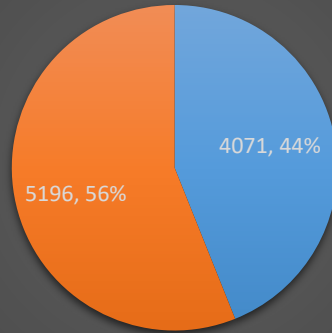
■ CS/CAP Related ■ Non CS Related

Spennymoor - Footfall



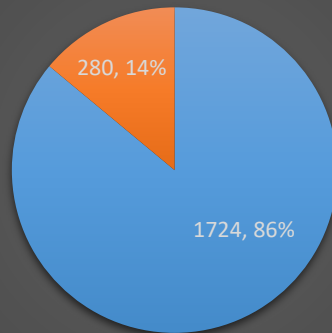
■ CS/CAP Related ■ Non CS Related

Crook - Footfall



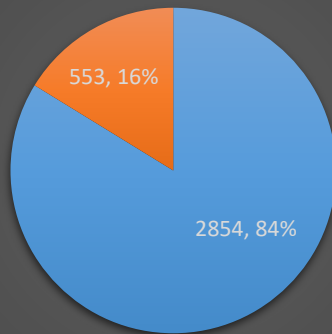
■ CS/CAP Related ■ Non CS Related

Barnard Castle - Footfall



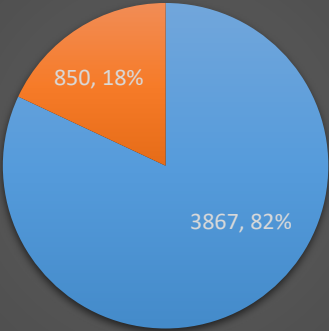
■ CS/CAP Related ■ Non CS Related

Chester-Le-Street Footfall



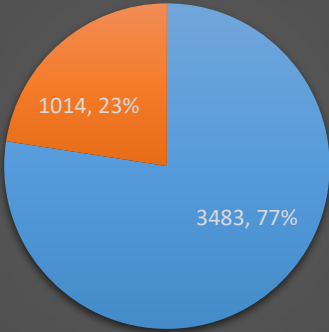
■ CS/CAP Related ■ Non CS Related

Consett Footfall



■ CS/CAP Related ■ Non CS Related

Stanley - Footfall



■ CS/CAP Related ■ Non CS Related