

## **Warwickshire Council deploys automated Speech Dialler to drive service efficiency**

**London, UK. 18th June 2008.** Warwickshire County Council (WCC) has invested in a Macfarlane automated Speech Dialler in the latest stage of its Service Transformation programme.

The Dialler will answer incoming customer calls with an automated greeting and then ask callers for the name of the person they wish to speak to. Using advanced speech recognition techniques, the system will then match spoken names to those contained in its database, and route calls through to the correct telephone extensions.

WCC hopes that the new automated technology will handle as much as 30% of the switchboard calls it receives – drastically reducing the need to tie up Service Advisors on switchboard duties. And callers who don't know the name of the person they want to speak to won't be inconvenienced. Their calls will still automatically and immediately be diverted to live operators for efficient call handling.

The Macfarlane Speech Dialler system, which has been trialled by WCC since January 21st 2008, currently contains the names of around 5000 employees. Accuracy (i.e. the number of times the system correctly matches the name being spoken with a Council employee) during the trial has been over 90%. When an accurate match is not made, callers are transferred to live operators.

“The speech recognition system trial has been very successful from a usability and accuracy point of view” said Adrienne Bellingeri, Customer Contact Manager at Warwickshire County Council. “We are looking to fully deploy the system for switchboard calls in June 2008.”

A modern, advanced contact centre

The deployment of speech automation is the latest in a long line of technology investments the Council has made to transform Service Delivery.

When it first opened its Customer Service Centre (CSC) in 2002, WCC had a basic call handling system and a rudimentary in-house developed Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.

In 2004, as a member of the Warwickshire Direct Partnership (WDP), WCC purchased a new CRM system and CallPlus, an advanced Contact Centre call handling solution from Macfarlane Telesystems. In 2005, it purchased the Q-Max Workforce Management (WFM) system via Macfarlane to address schedule adherence and forecasting issues, and in 2007 added both the Macfarlane Call Recording/ Quality Management solution and Customer Survey, a new automated software capability from Macfarlane that takes customer feedback and measures customer satisfaction.

Today, the CSC handles over 500,000 calls a year, 9500 Disabled Parking Badge Applications, and a rapidly growing number of web and email contacts. (In addition, customers can make face-to-face contact with the Council by walking into one of its six One Stop Shops that are located within the County).

The CSC is operated out of two centres in Warwick and Bedworth which function as a single 'virtual' contact centre (using the same technology platforms). Fifty eight personnel are currently employed to handle customer calls; plus a further six to handle switchboard calls. The centre handles a range of services for the Council from Adult Health to Highways. A further eight new services – including Free School Meals, Registrars and Corporate Complaints are being introduced over the coming months as part of a major expansion.

#### Partnership working and integrated reporting

The CSC has other ambitious growth and development plans as Adrienne Bellingeri explains. "While our initial foray into partnership-working was very much about centralised buying power, we are now looking at the operational advantages of working with local partners. In July 2008, the customer services arm of Warwick District Council will be moving into our Warwick centre to share our facilities and technology platforms. And as we become more integrated with local partners, we will

also be exploring opportunities to create single CSC operations. Contact centre accreditation by the end of the year is another major objective.”

“The need to be more integrated dominates much of our current thinking. For example, we are currently looking at our Management Information resources with a view to rapidly and seamlessly pulling together information from various sources (Automatic Call Distributor, Workforce Management, Quality Management, Customer Relationship Management, spreadsheets etc.) into easy-to-use reports that can be used to maximise quality, performance and customer satisfaction.”

“The Macfarlane technology has had a major impact in these areas already. Using Macfarlane, we can see who is calling, what calls are about, what agent skills we have available, and a lot more. It gives us more options and enables us to handle calls more effectively. Indeed, a Customer Satisfaction survey carried out in February and March 2008 revealed that customers scored the quality of service we deliver an average 7.6 out of 10, with over 90% of customers stating that they would recommend our services to others” added Adrienne Bellingeri.

“Over the last five years, Warwickshire County Council’s Customer Service Centre has moved from a start-up to one of the most advanced operations in the whole of the local authority sector in terms of the way it has harnessed technology to create a modern, integrated and high quality operation” said Paul Skinner, Sales Director, Macfarlane Telesystems. “We are delighted to have played a part in such an exciting and visionary project.”

### **About Macfarlane**

Founded in 1987, Macfarlane is a UK developer and supplier of communication solutions to service providers, enterprises and public sector organisations. Its CallPlus platform supports a range of applications including multi media contact centre, IVR, management statistics, recording and unified communications. Its SpeechPlus platform supports Speech Recognition, and other speech-driven applications such as the Macfarlane VoiceDialler. The company delivers cost-effective, market-focused solutions directly and through strategic partnerships with vendors such as Lagan, Capita, Northgate, Steria and Serco.

Macfarlane has established a strong position in the public sector where it assists central and local government reach e-government targets, providing a citizen-centric approach while working within Best Value practices. Existing customers number more than 80 local councils including those within the Government's Partnership programme such as Somerset Direct Partnership, the Warwickshire Direct Partnership, the Lancashire Direct Partnership, and more recently the Staffordshire Connects Partnership. CallPlus has enabled these Partnerships to link their many local councils and create single 'virtual' contact centres that serve citizens on a county-wide basis. More details can be found at <http://www.macfar.co.uk>

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