

Modernising the contact centre

Principal solutions architect at Amazon Web Services (AWS), **Andrew Langhorn**, discusses evolving challenges and solutions for emergency services control rooms



We are all used to getting better interactions and faster answers from the companies and institutions we contact. Public expectation of contact with emergency services is no different.

We expect to be able to reach our public services using the channel of our choosing, with voice remaining the predominant channel for emergency contacts. Non-emergency contacts via digital channels make up 20 million contacts a year, with demand growing as the number of channels increases.

Prioritising the right calls for those at greatest risk of harm – whether they dial 999 or 101 – must be done as quickly as possible.

Easing the pressure

Dealing with non-emergency calls is a difficult, demanding and stressful job. Callers can be extremely upset and frustrated. Recruiting, managing and retaining staff remain a challenge, especially with the need to work within restricted budgets. In today's society, more people are attracted to home or hybrid working, which has been hard for contact centres to achieve while maintaining the necessary levels of care and support. Any technology that makes life easier for staff, speeds responses and improves productivity is a benefit for both your staff and the public.

Simplifying access to data

Operators deal with multiple different systems to get the information they need. This is typical of any organisation that builds its technology over time with systems that struggle to talk to each other.

Call-handlers need faster access to the data in these systems, in order to quickly take action. Barriers to accessing data create stress for the staff member, delay for the public and, potentially, difficulty in getting the caller the information needed. Giving staff a 'single pane of glass' with access to all the information they need eases and accelerates call resolution.

Access to the right tools also makes it easier for managers to identify welfare concerns and stress earlier, which means better support for staff and, ultimately, better retention.

Broader changes ahead

The 'single pane of glass' approach lines up with the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC)'s National Contact Management Strategic Plan 2023-2028, which highlights the need for

better convergence of communication channels, be they voice or digital, to improve service delivery and meet public expectations.

The NPCC suggests changing the non-emergency contact model by joining up 101 and digital non-emergency contacts into one system. Similar challenges also exist in the rest of the blue-light industries.

Where technology can help

At AWS, we have the products, skills and network of delivery partners to support this strategy. We start by working backward from our customers' needs. Our omnichannel cloud contact centre, Amazon Connect, can link systems to give the operator better information about the caller and their history.

For example, being alerted to the fact that someone has contacted services several times, via different channels, might give the operator the information they need to decide that there is something else going on that warrants investigation.

Demand redirection can also be automated. We have seen success with customers using Amazon Lex to understand key words within a contact.

And where this does not require a blue-light response, redirect the contact to the appropriate service.

Through the use of artificial intelligence and natural language analysis across contact channels, Amazon Connect could automate threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability and engagement (THRIVE) assessments of calls.

Services such as Amazon Comprehend can even read text transcriptions to understand sentiment and assess a caller's mood, and support the contact-handler to assist the member of the public effectively. These capabilities allow organisations to triage effectively, focus on the victim, and to better support contact-handlers.

Working across channels means there is a greater requirement to give frontline staff access to the information they need to respond to critical incidents and protect the public. The data produced gives managers a much better understanding of how staff are coping and what support they might need, as well as data on how the public is using organisations' systems and how well they are responding.

For further information about how AWS can help to modernise the blue-light contact centre, contact us using the details right. 

