CACI

Kirklees
COUNCIL
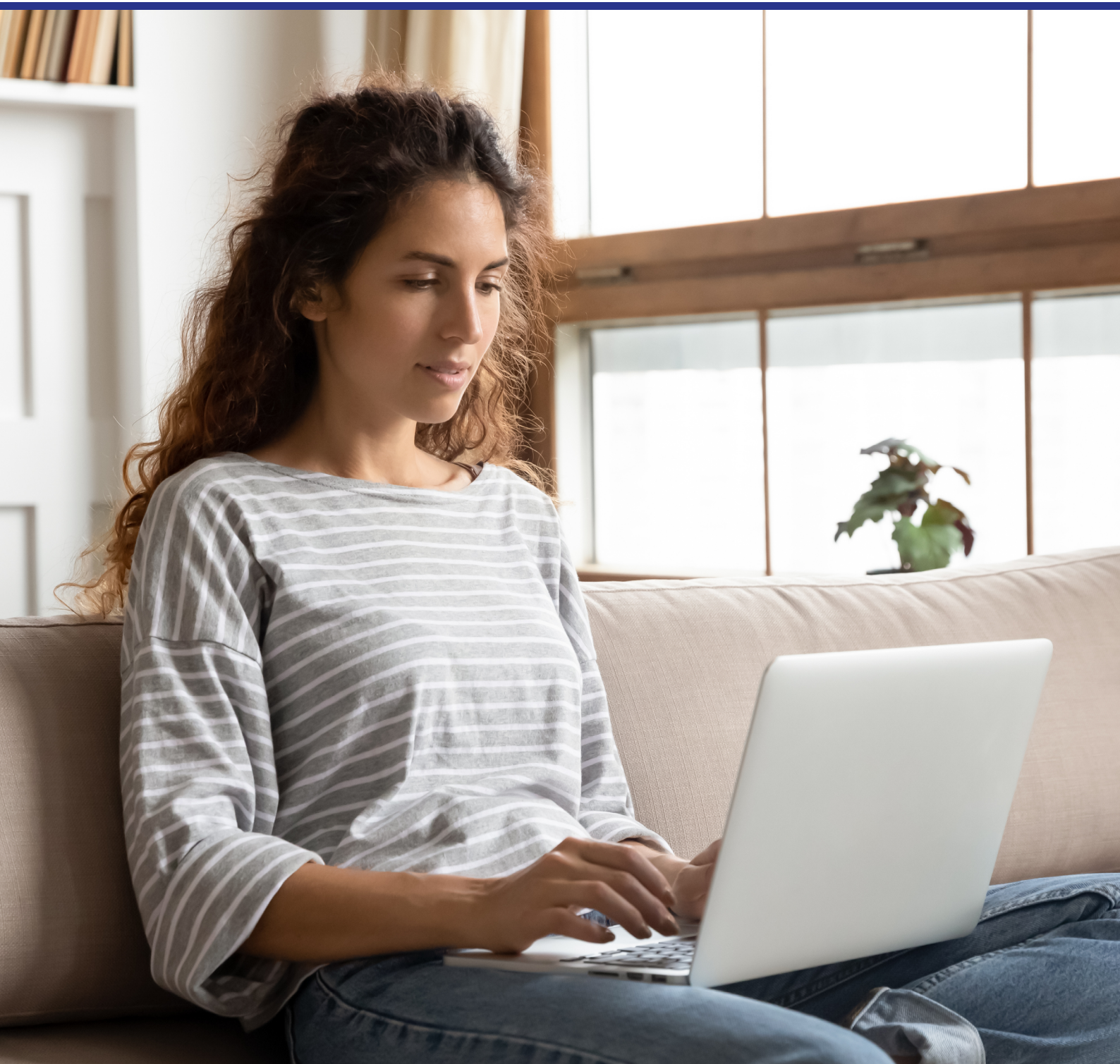
Kirklees Council enhances digital self-service for residents through Acorn

Background

Kirklees Council has a population of 437,593 and covers an area of 157 square miles. It is the third largest authority in West Yorkshire and is a constituent member of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority. Like many local authorities, Kirklees Council faces a dual challenge of managing budgetary constraints while addressing increasing demand for services. To maintain the quality of services that residents value, the council has focused on encouraging the use of lower-cost digital self-service options wherever possible. One key area identified for improvement was the handling of council tax inquiries, which placed a significant burden on call centre resources. Following conversations with CACI about the impact that demographic data insights could bring to alleviate this challenge, it was clear to Kirklees Council that this was the solution to the challenge.
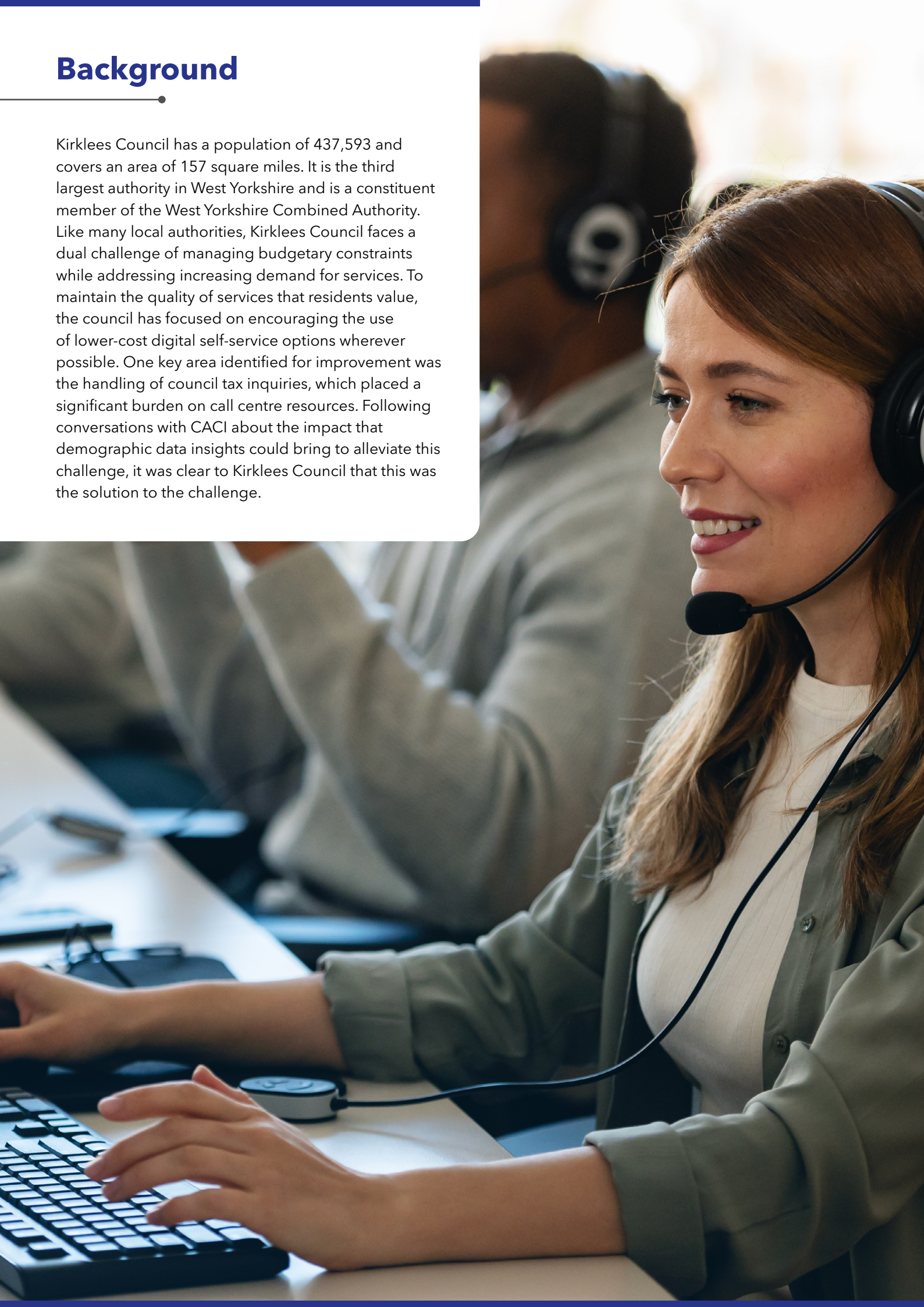
Challenge

With over 190,000 households in the Kirklees area, the council's call centre received a substantial volume of calls related to council tax. During the 2022/23 period, approximately 16% of these households contacted the call centre about council tax issues. A significant portion of these calls - 47% - were categorised under 'check or query a bill,' with 60% of these queries related to checking instalments or outstanding balances and seeking advice. Additionally, 16% of callers made payments through the call centre. Notably, 31% of accounts had repeat callers, with 5% of households calling four or more times within the year.

The council recognised the need to delve deeper into not only understanding the reasons behind these calls, but also the demographics of the callers, particularly repeat callers. This insight was crucial in shaping the design of effective strategies that would reduce the volume of calls and promote the use of digital self-service solutions. Lacking data or insight about these callers heightened these challenges, which is where CACI's data would prove to be essential.

Solution

To address this challenge, the Council's project team collaborated with their Data and Insight (DI) team to analyse call centre data using CACI's segmentation tool, Acorn. Acorn supplied a detailed demographic and socio-economic profile of the households contacting the council. The profiling revealed that a significant proportion of both first-time and repeat callers belonged to younger and less affluent Acorn demographic segments, specifically Cash-Strapped Families, Urban Diversity and Hard-Up Households.

Acorn's Knowledge Sheet, which includes over 800 variables from digital behaviours to channel preferences, helped illustrate that these groups should be the ones to utilise self- service capabilities instead of calling. As these groups continued to call, the Council was compelled to investigate additional factors that could bolster self-sufficiency for residents, such as their website. They quickly realised that if they were to redesign the website to better support self-service options for these target groups, the Council would have a better chance at encouraging behavioural change and telephone enquirers online, thus reducing service demand and achieving cost efficiencies.

Without Acorn's detailed analysis, the Council would not have gained crucial insights into their target resident group's behaviours, preferences and needs. This understanding was vital for identifying the necessary enhancements to the website that would encourage these groups to shift their interactions online. Acorn's data provided a solid evidence base, highlighting specific areas for improvement and enabling the Council to make data-driven decisions. This bolstered the Council's targeted redesign strategies, ensuring the website signposts users to self-service options and contributes to the reduction of call centre demand. Acorn's insights were instrumental in shaping a more efficient, user-friendly digital experience for residents.

Benefits

With an evidence base provided by Acorn's detailed analysis, the Council is set to undertake several initiatives to reduce the need for phone calls by further enhancing digital self-service options, including:

- **Implementing chatbots:** Implementing chatbots capable of answering common queries related to council tax will provide immediate relief and reduce call volumes.

- **Council tax balance checker:** The Council is developing a quick and easy-to-use online tool allowing residents to check their council tax balance and instalment details without having to call the council.

These initiatives are guided by the insights gained from Acorn, which identified specific demographic segments and their preferences. By focusing on these insights, the Council can effectively target improvements that will encourage the use of digital self-service options, resulting in fewer calls. The enhanced website, combined with the introduction of chatbots and the balance checker tool, will provide residents with sufficient alternatives to calling the Council. These changes will not only improve the customer experience, but ensure the Council allocates resources more effectively to achieve further cost efficiencies.

Furthermore, the Council will be planning targeted outreach activities with landlords and tenants—identified through Acorn segments—to further reduce call volumes. This initiative aims to educate these groups on the available digital self-service options and encourage their adoption.

Outcomes

Reflecting on the success of this project thus far, Kirklees Council shared the following that will continue guiding their efforts:

Data-driven decision-making
Utilising demographic and socio-economic data to inform strategies will continue to be crucial for addressing specific community needs effectively.

Targeted interventions
Understanding service users' profiles enables the design of tailored interventions that will resonate with different demographic groups.

Continuous improvement
The Council remains committed to continuously improving its digital self-service offerings to stay relevant and user-friendly.

By leveraging Acorn insights and focusing on digital transformation, Kirklees Council is now better equipped to manage budgetary pressures while maintaining high-quality services for residents. This approach not only addresses current challenges but also sets a solid foundation for future improvements in service delivery. The detailed analysis provided by Acorn has been instrumental in understanding residents' behaviours and guiding the Council's strategies towards more effective and efficient service delivery.

To find out more about how CACI can help you support your organisation, please get in touch.

CACI | do amazing things with data