

Southwark Council

Building trust and engagement with RCS Business Messaging

Customer Summary

Customer name

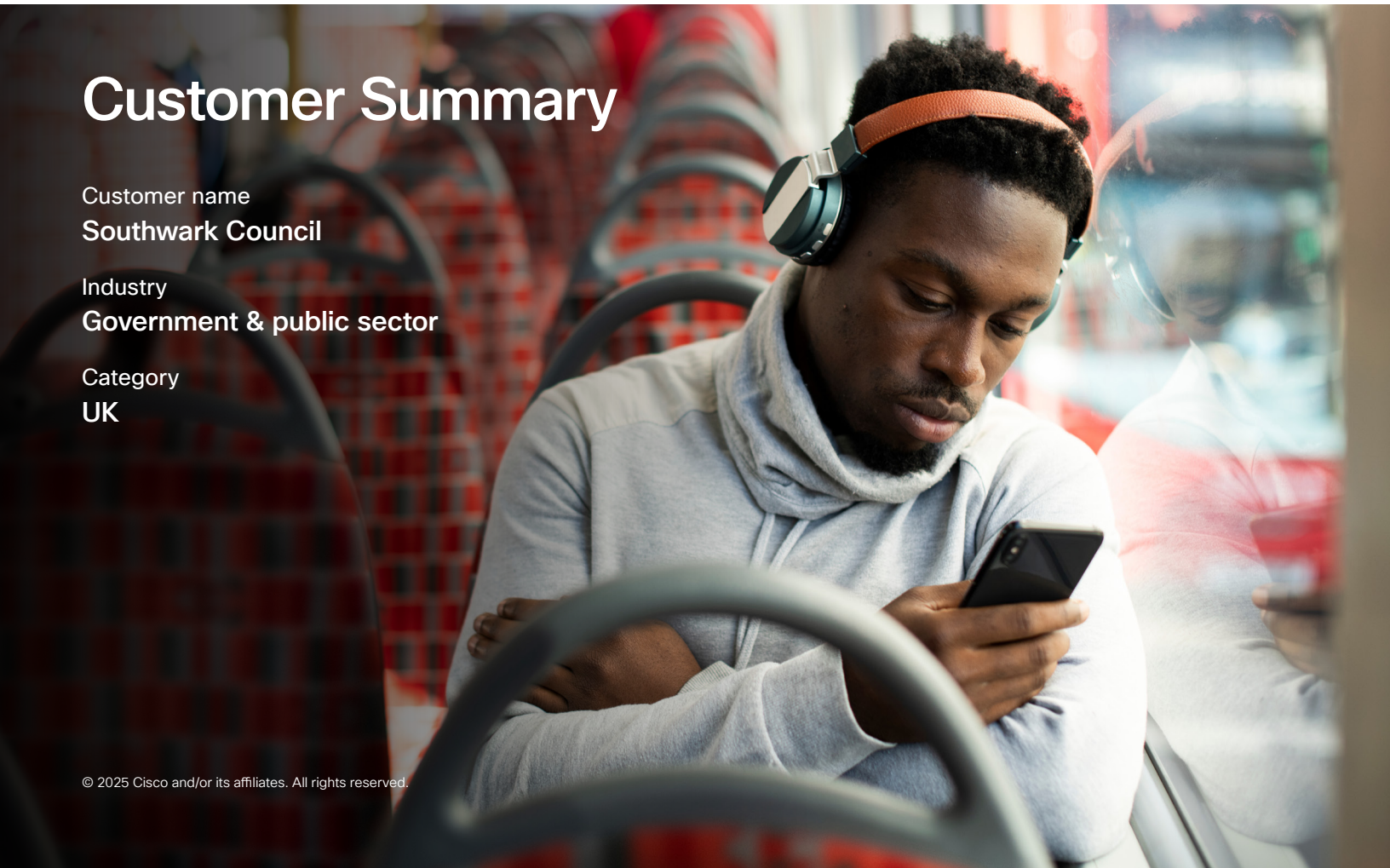
Southwark Council

Industry

Government & public sector

Category

UK



A local council building consumer trust through innovation

Southwark London Borough Council is a local authority in the UK with responsibilities for council tax and local services such as housing, education, environment and more.

Southwark Council has been working with its partner Telsolutions for many years; they specialize in providing multi-channel messaging solutions for local governments in the UK. By continuing to innovate with technology partners, Southwark have built up a reputation as being a forward-thinking local authority, often the first to try new solutions.

However, Southwark have faced issues when sending communications via SMS and email, with customers often unsure of the legitimacy of the message they are receiving.

The messages that Southwark Council are sending to customers are often critical in nature, so it was imperative that the communications they sent out were trusted and secure. However, due to the rise in fraud and phishing scams, using SMS as a channel reduced customer confidence in the messages they were getting and Southwark needed to think outside the box.

To solve this issue, Telsolutions established a partnership with Webex and together, built a solution using RCS Business Messaging to help build trust and legitimacy within Southwark Council's customer base.



Challenges

- Rise of fraud and SMS phishing scams
- Reduced customer trust and confidence



Objectives

- Higher customer engagement due to improved trust in messaging
- Increase debt collection payments



Why Webex?

- 16+ communication channels within Webex Connect platform including RCS Business Messaging
- Partnership with Telsolutions



Solution

Increasing customer engagement through verified RCS Business Messaging

In order to improve the trust and legitimacy of its communications, Southwark have worked with Telsolutions and Webex CPaaS Solutions to build customer journeys via RCS Business Messaging (RCS). RCS is an upgrade to SMS that enables businesses to create rich, app-like experiences from within the messaging inbox. The channel also increases trust and security through verified business accounts and custom branding as well as promoting higher customer engagement through the use of interactive features such as carousels, quick replies, and rich media.

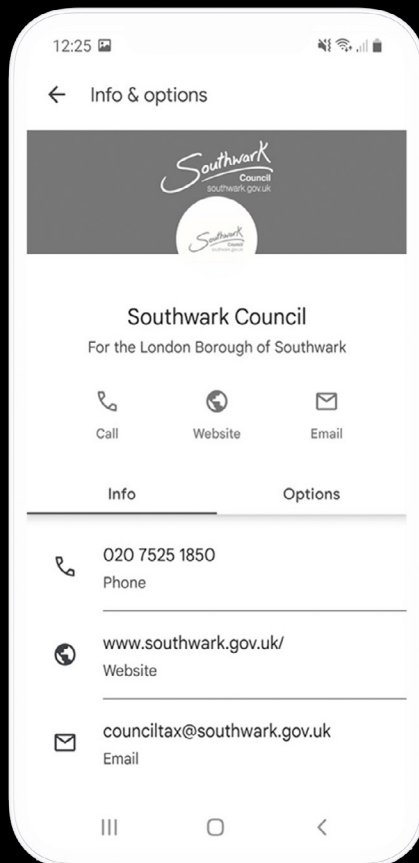
Southwark Council first launched RCS for its communications around debt recovery to customers for council tax payments. Customers would receive a message if they had missed a payment instalment but before they received a statutory reminder, they hoped this would reduce the number of statutory reminders they would have to send.

Southwark had established integrations with Telsolutions systems but they used Webex Connect to route the messages via RCS, or if the mobile handset was not enabled with RCS, the message would be sent via SMS.

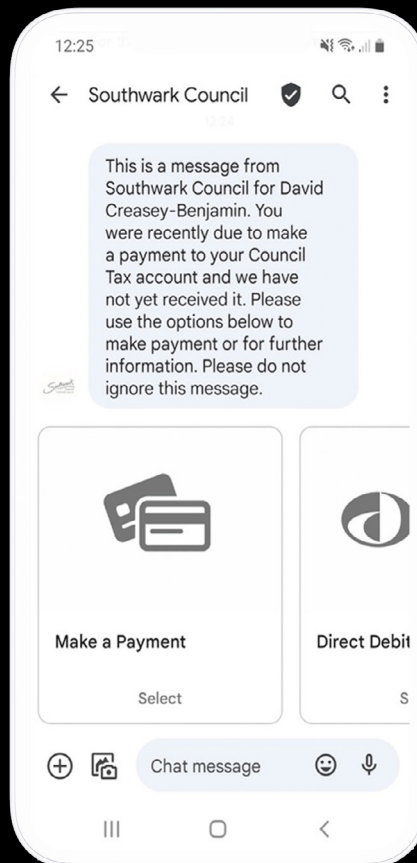
Southwark had a positive onboarding process for the setup of RCS Business Messaging that was facilitated by Telsolutions and Webex. The council had to be registered with the mobile networks and adhere to the correct data protection requirements in order for Google to sign off a verified business account. This all happened in a matter of weeks. Now that Southwark Council have a verified account, they are planning to roll out RCS for other points in the recovery process so there is an end-to-end customer journey for debt collections management.

In order to measure the success of using this new channel for collections management, Southwark designed and shared a survey with their customers to determine the effectiveness of the channel. This survey asked customers if they felt reassured by the verified message, how it compared to previous communications they had received, and the overall experience.

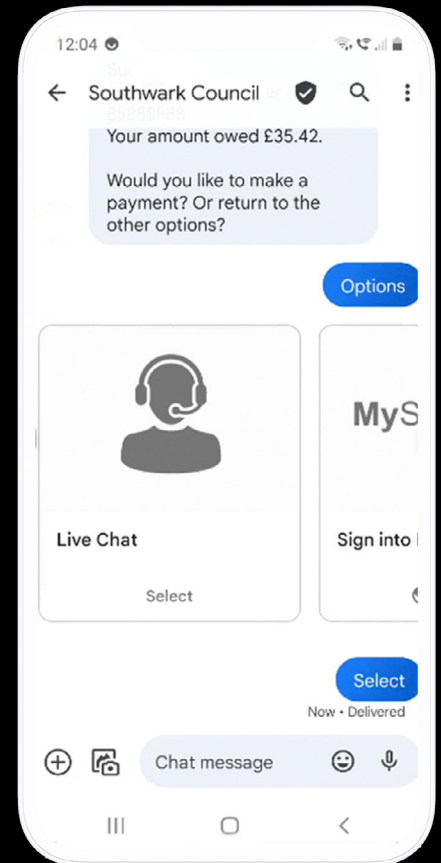
Improving payment collection rates via RCS



RCS offers a verified business account with custom branding to improve brand recognition and trust.



The interactive RCS carousel feature provides the customer with a number of different options of what to do when they receive the message.



The customer has the option to make the payment or get further support by being transferred to the live chat option on Southwark's website.

Results

RCS helped Southwark Council to build trust in their communications and create seamless customer experiences that increased engagement rates for payment collections.

The results of the customer survey that Southwark Council sent were impressive. 90% customers said that they felt more reassured and better served with the communications sent via RCS Business Messaging and there was also a 24% increase in the messages that were delivered. In addition, there was a 51% increase in customers choosing to take action which resulted in a 31% increase in people choosing to pay.

“Trust is hugely important for local government communications and is especially important when the message is asking someone to make a payment. With the rise of fraud and SMS phishing scams, public sector organizations need to start looking at implementing new technologies such as RCS in order to build trust and legitimacy. It was fantastic to partner with Webex on this project and we are so pleased with the results that Southwark Council have experienced.” – Daniel Pearce, Director of Business Development at Telsolutions.

“We are proud to be a forward-thinking local authority, always looking at introducing innovative solutions to improve our services. RCS has been a game-changer in reassuring our customers that the messages we send are indeed from us and therefore this has significantly increased the payment rates for council tax collection and debt recovery.

We look forward to working together with Telsolutions and Webex to introduce the channel for more local government services to increase customer engagement and improve our customer experience.” – Norman Lockie, Head of Income Operations at Southwark Council.

Southwark Council are also looking at the potential to roll out RCS for other debt types but also for more promotional campaigns that are not designed for chasing payments such as increasing direct debit uptake.

90%

**Felt more reassured
and better served**

51%

**Increase in customer
taking action**

31%

**Increase in customer choosing
to pay after receiving a message**

July 2025