

# Barnardo's achieves 40% Customer Portal adoption within 3 months of implementing vFire 9.2

Client	Barnardo's
In Brief	Barnardo's goal was to improve its customers' service experience. Using a Continuous Service Improvement Register to shape the ITSM specification, Alemba supported the Service Desk team in a hands-on, clean installation and configuration of Alemba's vFire v9.2. The collaborative nature of the upgrade alongside a campaign to improve the service team's understanding of the customer experience, has significantly improved the charity's targets for customer engagement and has supported Barnardo's in achieving a 3-star rating in its SDI audit
Business	Children's charity
Location	UK
Reach	Almost 1,700 sites including offices, shops and home offices across the UK. Staff can also work on the move.
Software	vFire 9.2
Timeline	Six months from initiation to transition phase

Barnardo's is the largest children's charity in Britain. For 150 years they have been supporting the UK's most vulnerable children. It works directly with **240,000 children**, young people and families every year and runs more than **960 vital services** across the UK.

A Service Management team of 32 provides ITSM support to 8,000 staff and 15,000 volunteers across the UK. They work at almost 1,700 sites including offices, shops and home-based offices.

## Benefits

- Barnardo's Service Desk achieved 3\* SDI rating on its first audit
- 40% channel shift to Customer Portal
- Increased customer feedback: 20% of all calls generating a survey response
- Low total cost of ownership

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James Pitt, IT Service Director

In late 2014, the charity identified a significant opportunity to improve the effectiveness of its Service Management capabilities. The legacy ITSM system, Infra8, was limiting the team's ability to improve workflows. More specifically, users were often left uninformed of progress and communication was manual and ad hoc.

James Pitt, IT Service Director, led the team in establishing a Continuous Service Improvement Register focused on improving their customers' experience. This schedule of improvements was critical in shaping the charity's specification for an improved, flexible and cost effective ITSM solution.

The team set tangible and stretching targets for an ITSM system upgrade. The target for user adoption of the new Customer Portal was set at 30%. Customer experience would be regularly measured through customer feedback surveys. It was also vital to have an ITSM solution that would support users in the event of major incidents. SDI (Service Desk Institute) Audits would provide an external perspective on the charity's Service Desk capabilities. Achieving a strong SDI rating would be motivating for the Service Desk team as well as providing an objective performance measure on Barnardo's investment in its ITSM.

James Pitt, IT Service Director explains the decision to 'upgrade' from Infra v8 to Alemba's vFire v9.2, “Infra v8 was already six years out of date. We had to decide whether to upgrade to vFire or move away altogether. We found Alemba and its people to be credible and sensible. One of the benefits of vFire was that we knew its data structures and knew how to work with its interface.

*That would be important to us in terms of generating reports in the future. The cost of configuring the system was the only one on the table. vFire was a cost-effective solution, the functionality met all of our requirements and we knew it had powerful capabilities.”*

## Blending configuration with training

Barnardo's proposed a blended configuration and training approach to the installation of vFire v9.2. The strategy reflected the charity's own ethos of working with customers and staff to maximise their opportunities and potential.

*James Pitt says, “A blended approach to installing vFire is a very cost-effective way to develop our use of vFire. When we want additional expertise - say to meet specific deadlines - we are much more confident about working with Alemba and can be assured that we'll achieve the planned results.”*

*“We wanted our team to increase its' capabilities and to blend the configuration with our training needs. Alemba was already familiar with this approach. We had the positive feeling of playing an active part in the project, while Alemba guided us down a well-trodden path. We worked to a detailed plan based on our CSI Register, so that we knew how long each stage would take and who would need to be involved and when.”*

A traditional 'out of the box' specification would have included an early assessment of required and desirable features accompanied by a schedule of installation and configuration requirements and a roll out of training seminars.

Each phase of enablement workshops had a knowledge transfer component where Alemba's project manager explained the section of the system, performed partial configuration and ensured that Barnardo's had the knowledge to continue and complete the configuration.

This gave the Service Management team the opportunity to learn the configuration as it was being built, understand the implementation and have hands on experience of the system. Ultimately, this approach aimed to reduce TCO (Total Cost of Ownership) by enabling Barnardo's to configure the system to match it to the on-going needs of the business.

With two to three workshops running every week for six weeks, Barnardo's was able to rigorously interrogate and streamline its own processes.

James Pitt says, *"This was a more satisfactory and deeper learning experience than traditional training and ensured that Barnardo's would use every relevant feature and facility that vFire has to offer."*

*We spent a lot of time with Chris, Alemba's project manager. He was brilliant: he knows his technology, he knows vFire and his interpersonal skills are excellent."*

## A clean installation

Alemba supported the charity with a clean installation of vFire. This gave all the benefits of working with a brand new system free of legacy content or processes.

The workshops were extremely productive in terms of developing previously unused features. The Service Desk team had been able to develop new processes and workflows for vFire's problem management and change management.

Other features such as Customer Surveys and Service Level Management were configured to reflect Barnardo's goals for improvement.

Barnardo's selected data from the legacy knowledge bank for cleaning and migration to the new system ensuring that IT officers could continue to access relevant data.

By the end of the series of enablement workshops, Alemba's consultants had worked with Barnardo's ITSM team to review, re-work and implement an increased number of IT service management processes:

- **Incident Management** - to log, track, update and resolve incidents
- **Problem Management** - to manage problem records and show their relationship to relevant incidents and change requests
- **Change Management** - an improved workflow-driven change process
- **Service Request Management** - to log, track and complete service requests with the ability to include workflow
- **Service Level Management** - to track the quality of service provided
- **Knowledge Management** - a repository of information used to aid other processes
- **Customer Portal** - to give the customer a method of communicating with the IT department through an online webpage allowing them to monitor their own information, log new incidents/requests and browse the service
- **Reporting** - to produce documents which provide management information and metrics
- **Customer Survey** - to allow customers to feedback to the IT department
- **Feedback Management** - to log, track and update complaint/ compliments

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## An intelligent transition phase

Six months after the project start date, Barnardo’s launched its Fire v9.2 system to run in parallel with the legacy system, Infra v8 for approximately one month.

Barnardo’s team made an exceptional job of closing down the old system. They maintained a sharp focus on delivering a fast turn around on a high volume of calls, most of them with a short lifespan. Old calls were dealt with and closed within Infra v8 while new calls and requests were logged in vFire v9.2.

This approach enabled Infra v8 to be put into a read-only state for six months following the end of the transition phase before finally being decommissioned and the data archived for historical trending.

The enablement workshops had generated a strong sense of ownership among the IT officers for vFire. The entire team demonstrated a very positive approach to launching and implementing every aspect of vFire from day one of its launch.

## Communicating the difference vFire v9.2 makes

Barnardo’s service management team put a spotlight on their communication skills and made a strategic decision to be as open and communicative as possible in all areas of Service Desk activity. vFire’s email and reporting functions have been applied rigorously throughout all workflows.

James Pitt explains, “At Barnardo’s, our customers are also our colleagues, and we strive to maintain reciprocal relationships which encourage feedback and involvement in the development of IT projects and programs. The key driver behind the upgrade was enhanced customer service, so we also introduced automated feedback surveys, sent out on call resolution, to improve the quantity of surveys returned. Response rates have gone up from 200 p/m to 200 p/w enabling us to analyse and learn.”

The culture of approachable professionalism is a key focus in the Service Desk’s internal campaign on understanding the customer’s experience. Over six months, the team examined the use of a range of communication techniques that are already enabling them to deliver an improved service.

vFire has enabled the Service Desk team to record and share details such as individual communication preferences (task oriented or conversational) as well as how urgent or emotive the incident might be for the customer. Increasing the use of email and automated reporting has had a direct impact on use of the customer portal and increased customer feedback:

- **Effective communication** – during the last major incident, in excess of 300 customers subscribed to the incident of vFire
- **Increased customer feedback** – 20% of all calls to Barnardo’s ITSM team are generating a survey response, enabling the team to gain a deeper understanding of its customers’ experience
- **Increased use of the customer portal** – the number of customers using the portal within the first 3 months is 40% (exceeding the original target of 30%)

## Measuring the difference vFire v9.2 makes

The combination of a knowledge sharing installation strategy and the intuitive, robust nature of vFire v9.2 has generated a strong return on investment for Barnardo's:

- **A low cost of ownership** – the workshop approach has allowed the IT team to continually improve the system with little or no involvement from Alemba. Where consultancy advice is required, the team is able to specify time and outcomes with greater accuracy and certainty of results.
- **Awarded a 3\* rating in its SDI audit** – in the first audit following vFire's installation, Barnardo's moved from unaccredited to 3\* status. This is the greatest improvement in ITSM systems and processes that SDI had seen in such a short period of time. The effective use of the customer portal supported Barnardo's strong SDI Audit scores.

## More continuous service improvements for Barnardo's

The success of the vFire installation has been impressive and the Service Desk team is ambitious for further improvements:

- **Improving customer feedback survey**

Before the vFire installation, customer experiences of the Service Desk required improvement.

With full functionality, increased communication and an improved understanding of the customer experience, Barnardo's have increased response rates to customer feedback surveys.

The challenge for the team is now to refine the questions asked in order to identify areas for future improvement and innovation.

The Service Desk team will continue to regularly survey customers' for their views, as even small movements and changes within an overall strong set of results will indicate areas that need attention.

- **Improve workflows**

vFire is a flexible ITSM platform and there are further Service Desk processes that offer the potential for automated workflow and communication. Barnardo's has incorporated automated authorization emails for IT and line manager approvals. These workflows will also extend to direct order confirmations to selected external suppliers.

Further testing and collaboration with key suppliers is planned as Barnardo's heads towards zero-touch purchasing for pre-authorized IT commodities.

- **Knowledge Management**

The Service Desk team is preparing customer-facing knowledge articles for sharing during the Incident logging process on the Portal. Work is underway to enable vFire to generate prompts to read relevant Knowledge Base articles during the logging process so that customers have early, direct access to solutions.