

# FYLDE COAST ARC OFFERS DIGITAL SOLUTION FOR CUSTOMERS

**In March 2019, Fylde Coast Accident Repair Centre moved into a purpose-built bodyshop in the Blackpool Enterprise Zone (featured in our Summer 2019 edition of Auto Body Professional). The stunning, 18,000 sq ft contemporary bodyshop has invested in the latest repair technology. Here we talk to Dane Hyland, Bodyshop Manager, about what's been happening since it officially opened and the company's IT development to improve customer communication.**



One year after Fylde Coast Accident Repair Centre opened its impressive facility in Blackpool, the UK went into national lockdown because of the Coronavirus pandemic. The company has invested heavily in technology and manufacturer approvals and the state-of-the-art new premises includes all aspects of ADAS recalibration, EV specialisation and full aluminum repair capability.

To stay competitive in this new business environment that COVID-19 has brought, Fylde Coast is taking the digital journey one step closer. "We have been sending SMS messages to our customers for quite some time now as one means of communication for regular repair updates, however, we wanted to improve on this and have recently created an online web chat," said Dane Hyland, Bodyshop Manager, Fylde Coast Accident Repair Centre. "It's something our website company has created for us, and we are looking at how to link this with our bodyshop management system data. People want to talk to people at a time that suits them. The first day we went live with the web chat, the interest immediately showed us how much our customers look at our website and proved to us that there was a need for this instant communication. It has reduced our phone enquiries and increased our net promoter scores. Not only does the web chat allow us to respond to customers quicker but we can talk to

multiple customers at the same time. It has allowed us to be even more efficient."

The web chat also illustrates what questions people are frequently asking. "We are hoping that some of the updates can be automated in the near future by voice recognition rather than requiring a manual response," said Dane. "By looking back at the data and the conversations, we will be able to create some pre-automated questions, but we need the data first before we are able to plan the questions and that's what we are in the process of doing."

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The web chat also means that customers don't need to contact the bodyshop during normal working hours. "We can extend this web chat to out of hours, so rather than just say it cuts off at 5pm, we can keep it

operating until 10pm at night and at weekends," said Dane.

"The staff have been fully behind us and we have spent time explaining our plans and what we want to achieve in our digital journey," added Dane.

Fylde Coast has also made other changes since the official opening which include a fast-track facility where smaller repairs are completed in less than 24 hours. "The fast track facility is totally separate and has evolved with the growth of technology such as UV curing and low energy paint products," said Dane. "It is really helping us secure new work and improve key-to-key times."

Since lockdown, the repair centre has also capitalised on its airport location and diversified into refinishing for private helicopters and light aircraft. "Our technicians involved in the aviation work have been highly motivated by working with new products, materials and processes," said Dane.

Fylde Coast ARC has recently invested in new equipment including a Car-O-Liner bench rack, spot welder, aluminum welder and dent pulling equipment, along with the training required to use these. They are also in the process of constructing a dedicated clean room for structural aluminum repairs. "Regardless of what is happening around the world we are still operationally doing very well," said Dane. "We are constantly looking at




Apprenticeships have always been an important part of the business and Fylde Coast has partnered with AutoRaise and the renowned Blackpool & Fylde College. "We currently have three apprentices - two with AutoRaise multi-skill apprenticeship and are looking to recruit more in the coming year, starting in September," said Dane.

Last November the company also moved over to the AutoFlow bodyshop management system. "We believe that AutoFlow is one of the best bodyshop management systems," said Dane. "Its Checkmate app for providing mobile estimates gives us the ability to have a touch-free interface with the customer, which is particularly welcomed during COVID-19. Customers don't need to get into close proximity with the drivers, they don't have to touch any paperwork or physically sign anything. AutoFlow is helping support us, our receptionists and our customers and we know that with less touch points in the customer journey, this is the way forward."

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2020 certainly had its challenges and the company believes these challenges will continue in 2021. "Working from home has become 'the new normal' during the COVID-19 pandemic," said Dane. "Aviva Insurance recently posted an article stating that they are making work-from-home a standard practice post-pandemic. Whilst we are expecting volume to increase after lockdown, in my opinion volume will not go back to where it was pre-COVID and we have already started to put in place new ways to help increase our revenue.

"Fylde Coast is constantly looking ahead and we can say with certainty that COVID-19 has provided us with an opportunity to re-imagine everything about how we run our company and also what we can do to make our customer journey better," said Dane. 

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"The training support we receive from our manufacturer approvals is absolutely first class, providing our technicians with confidence that they are kept up to date with the latest technology and new models, especially when working on EV's and ADAS," he added. "Knowledge and safety of repair is paramount when working on EV's and having the support from our approvals gives us peace of mind that our technicians are safe whilst working on these types of vehicles. We have seen a slight increase in working on EV's over the last year and are expecting this to increase and change rapidly over the next five years."

The investment Fylde Coast has made in its premises, technology and training has not gone unnoticed

by the industry and it has been shortlisted for two prestigious awards in the last six months. It was a finalist in the ABP Club Night of Knights awards last November for 'Best New Bodyshop Site', sponsored by OEC and Vizion Network, and was a finalist in the AutoRaise 'Repairer Supporting Apprenticeships Award' in the ABP Club British Bodyshop Awards, held online in January this year.

"We were delighted to get nominated in these awards," said Dane. "To have our name alongside some of the best repair groups in the finals is a great achievement. Being nominated for the Repairer Supporting Apprenticeships Award was especially close to our heart as we believe that our apprentices play a pivotal role in the future of our company and the industry. It is vital that we attract a young workforce and support those young people as they start their careers."

