



SUFFOLK CONSTABULARY

ORIGINATOR: CHIEF CONSTABLE

PAPER NO: AP25/04

**SUBMITTED TO: ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL –
17 JANUARY 2025**

SUBJECT: RESPONDING TO CALLS FOR ASSISTANCE

SUMMARY:

1. This report provides key information on emergency call (999) and non-emergency (101) call demand, call answering time and response times to attend emergency incidents from **1st October 2023 – 30th September 2024**.
2. The report also covers:
 - Emergency demand (999) data
 - Non-emergency (101) including Digital desk and IHub single online reporting calls are managed and the 'positive abandonment rate' resulting from callers switching to digital/ online services.
 - Call resolution within 101 call handling (CCA) and Emergency call 999 (Contact and Control Room)
 - Call Grading and Response Times
 - 'Right Care Right Person' and 'Domestic Abuse Video Response' current detail

RECOMMENDATION:

1. The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) is asked to consider the progress made by the Constabulary and raise issues with the Chief Constable as appropriate to the PCC's role in holding the Chief Constable to account.

DETAIL OF THE SUBMISSION

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This paper supports the commitment in the Police and Crime Plan.

- Maintain, and where necessary enhance, its good emergency response and call-handling performance.
- Improve its processes for answering non-emergency calls and develop appropriate channels to report crime and contact the police.

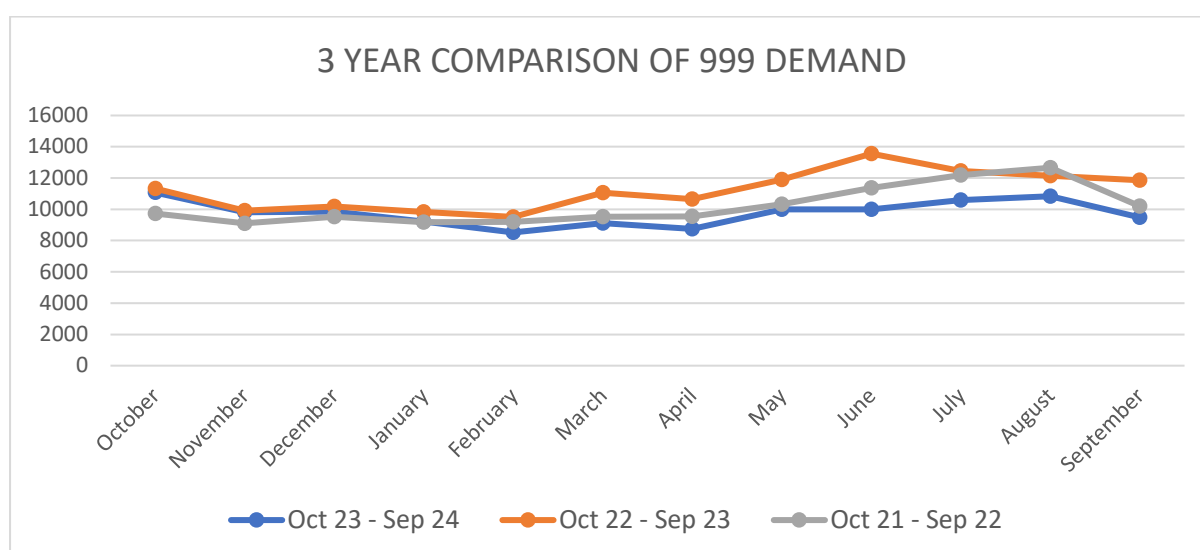
1.2 This report covers the period **1st October 2023 to 30th September 2024** and provides detail in relation to the processes in place to manage emergency and non-emergency calls. During this period, significant progress has been made with recruitment of control room operators, achieving national 999 call handling targets and reducing 101 abandonment rates along with the introduction of Right Care, Right Person (RCRP).

2. EMERGENCY CALL (999) PROCESS and DEMAND

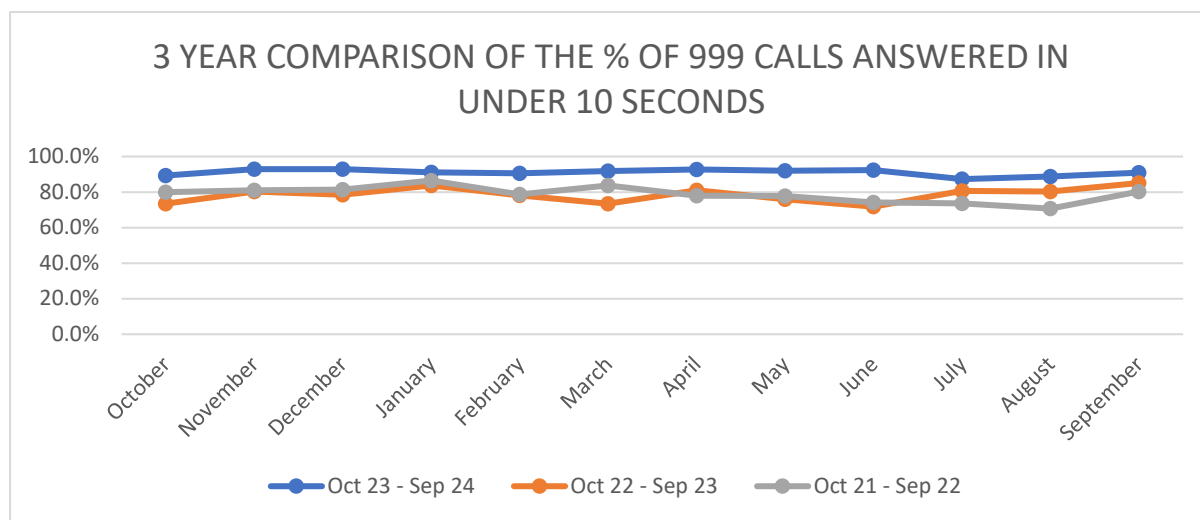
2.1 Process: Suffolk Contact and Control Room (CCR) Call Handlers remain responsible for answering and handling both 999 and 101 calls. The number of 999 calls handled by the Suffolk CCR Between 2019 and 2022 increased significantly, replicated in 2022/23; During this period an international Android issue was identified meaning there were a volume of accidental 999 calls to call handling centres. It is possible that a fix of this issue may have contributed, alongside increased digital reporting options, to the 2023/24 decrease in 999 demand.

2.2 Call Handlers continue to face a sustained level of demand. Handles are balancing the need to respond to emergency 999 calls as a priority over non-emergency 101 calls. In addition, the Call Handlers are taking more calls that involve vulnerable people, dealing with mental health concerns and other complex problems that are across society; as a result, Call Handlers are taking longer to deal with calls completing appropriate checks and managing complex calls.

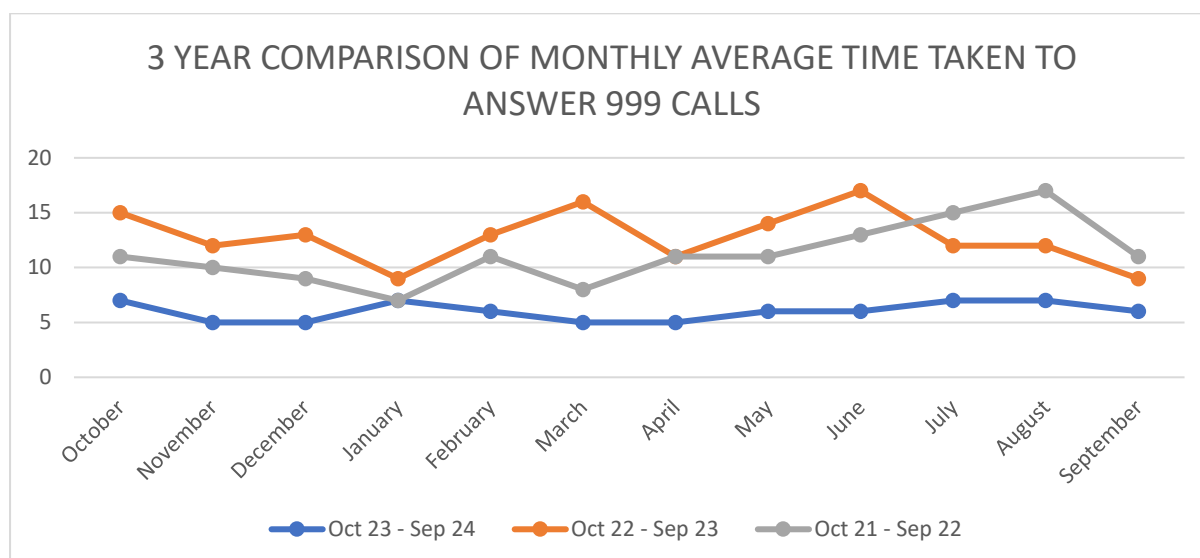
2.3 In the twelve months **1st October 2023 to 30th September 2024** Suffolk Constabulary CCR received 117,209 '999' calls. A decrease of 12.8% compared to the same period between 2022/2023 and 4.4% decrease since 2021/22.



- 2.4 Previous years have seen an increase in 999 demand in June. This year has not followed the trend. While there is no clear reason for this, it is noted that increased temperatures arrived later across the summer which often coincide with increased demand.
- 2.5 National Performance Targets for answering 90% of 999 calls within 10 seconds was a cause for concern for the Constabulary and highlighted within the recent His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy (PEEL) Inspection. Throughout the 12-month period (November 2023 onwards) Suffolk Constabulary performance has continued to improve consistently achieving over the 90%. As a result of the improved consistent performance, HMICFRS have removed Suffolk Constabulary from being a cause for concern to adequate.



- 2.6 Average Time to Answer 999 calls was naturally longer at our points of peak demand. Looking at this time period as a whole is reflective of the excellent progress when comparing to previous year's performance making significant gains in our answer times.

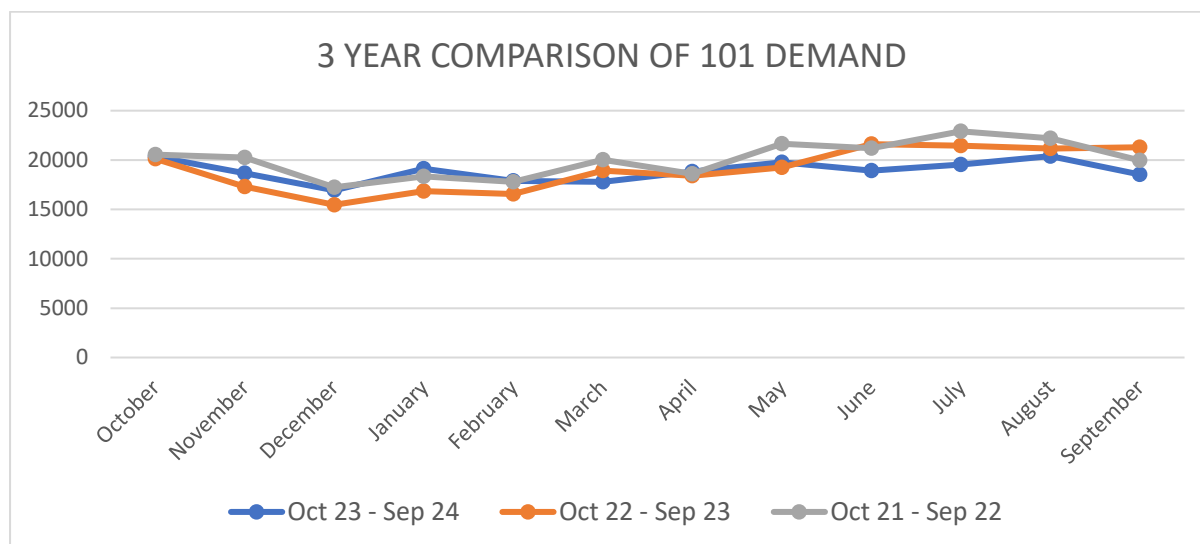


3. NON-EMERGENCY CALL (101) DEMAND

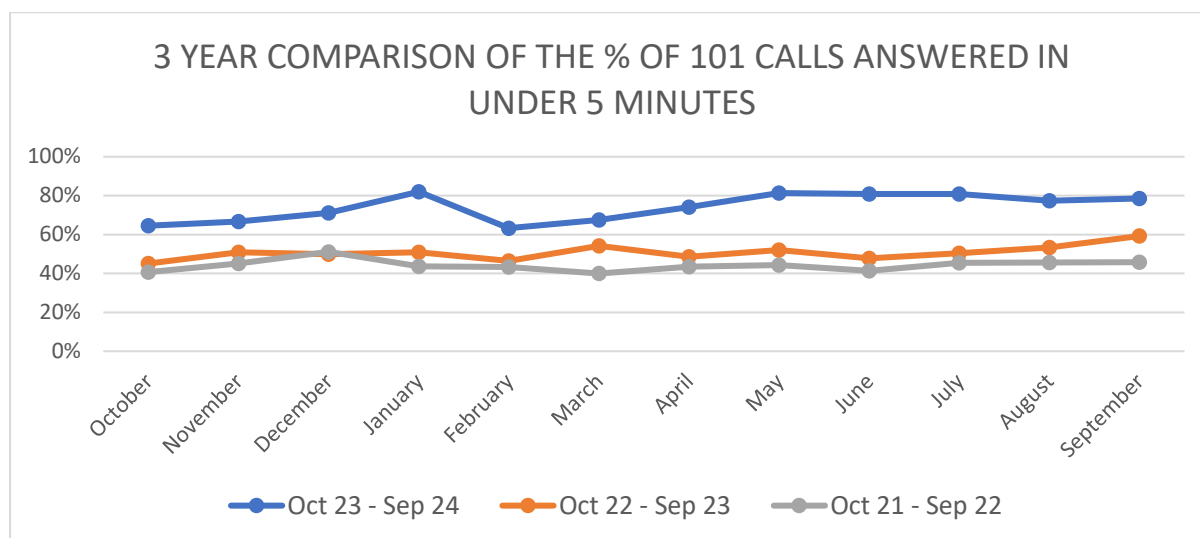
- 3.1 In the twelve months between **1st October 2023 to 30th September 2024** Suffolk Constabulary received 226,738 calls, a decrease of less than 1% compared to the previous period. When

dialling 101, callers are presented with a series of options. A number of these allow self-service via a voice recording menu of options – initial voice recording (IVR). Out of the 101 calls received, 179,915 calls continued past this stage without selecting a self-service option and were answered by a switchboard operator in the Central Call Answering (CCA) Team.

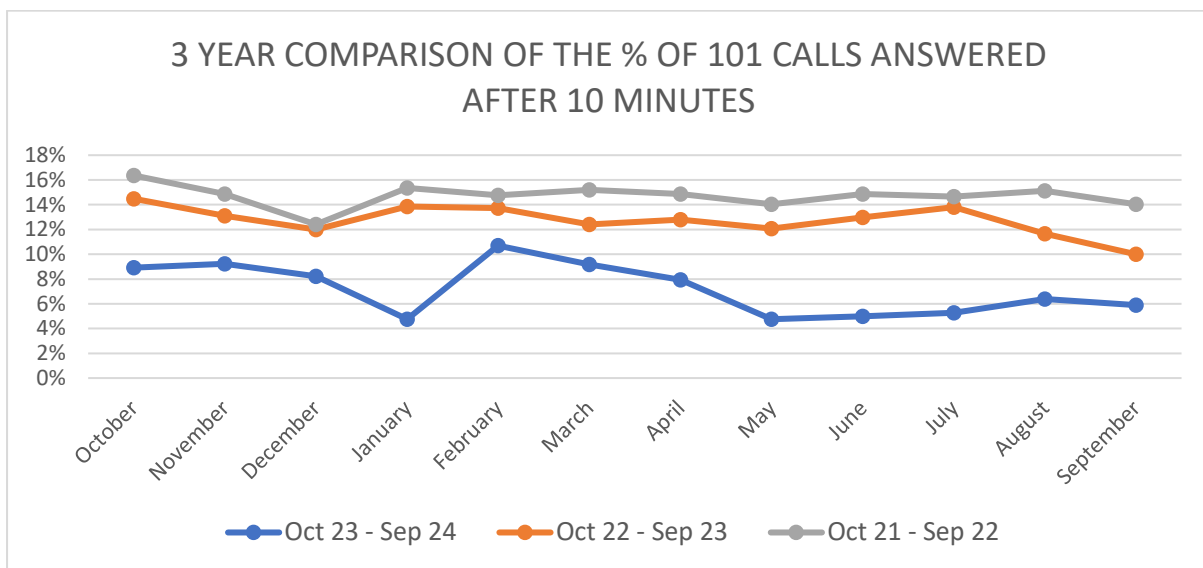
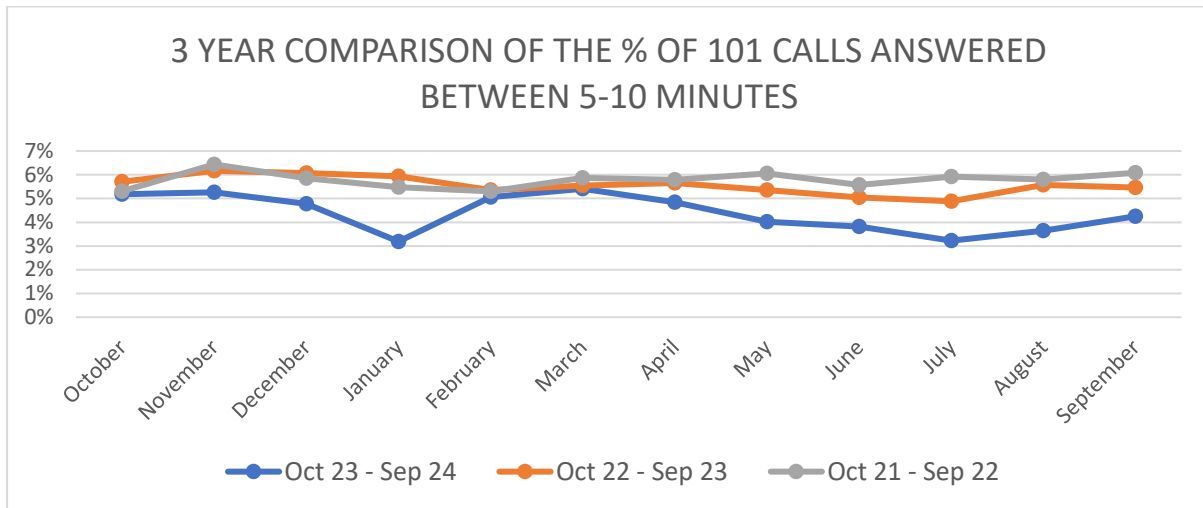
- 3.2 101 call demand has been consistent over the three-year period. An increasing number of service users are choosing digital channels (online reporting, Live Chat, social media). Single Online Home was introduced in November 2023. Digital uptake is a likely explanation for the slight decrease of 101 demand. Monthly fluctuations can be attributed to seasonal trends:



- 3.3 Between **1st October 2023 to 30th September 2024** 74% (avg) of 101 calls were answered in under 5 minutes, a 24% improvement from the previous 12-month period.



- 3.4 Between **1st October 2023 to 30th September 2024** over 78% of 101 calls were answered in under 10 minutes with positive performance increases in both categories (5-10 and 10+ minutes)



- 3.5 There is currently no national set standard for 101 call handling. The Constabulary is part of the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) national working group for 101 call handling, developing the National Contact Management Strategy promoting standards and best practice. This provides the force an opportunity to influence change on Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) for 101 call handling and abandonment rates.
- 3.6 There are two types of abandonment rates that are measured for 101 calls – short (under 30 seconds) and long (30+ seconds). When a caller dials 101, they are greeted with a list of options before being put through to an operator. During this time, members of the public are informed to end the call and dial 999 for an emergency and presented with a variety of options to report the incidents online except for Domestic abuse, Mental Health, Hate Crime, and Public Safety which have specified queue pathways. These messages are known as a Recorded Announcement Device (RAD). RAD has an impact on abandonment rates and alternative pathways.
- 3.7 The Constabulary publish the combined short and long abandonment rate. There has been a significant decrease from the previous year, reflective of additional options for callers, staffing, changes to policy and procedure as well as more users preferencing digital channels.

Yearly 101 abandonment rate Combined	Oct 23 - Sep 24	Oct 22 - Sep 23	Oct 21 - Sep 22
	16.9%	36.5%	39.9%

- 3.8 It is hypothesised that with short abandonments, service users are opting to utilise the digital platform rather than to wait in a call queue. However, systems analysis does not allow interrogation of this and therefore both short and long abandonment are combined. There are no other forces nationally that are able to track this fully. Suffolk are part of a national working group seeking to explore this.

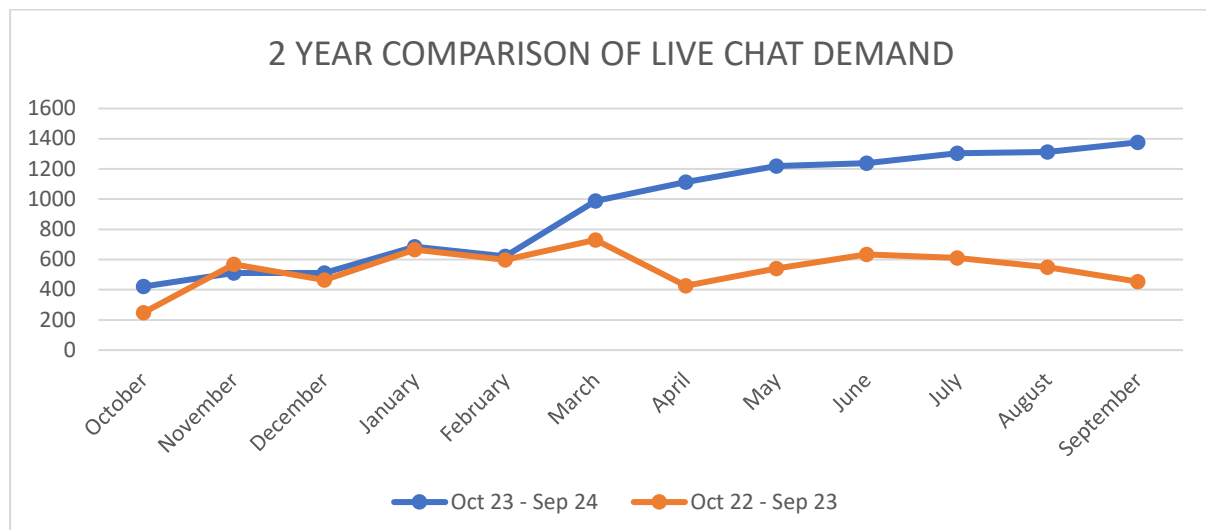
4. DIGITAL CONTACT AND ENGAGEMENT TEAM

- 4.1 Prior to the launch of CCR Digital Contact and Engagement Team (DigiDesk) all emails, and live chat contact workload was managed by CCR staff. In March 2024, the Constabulary launched the Digital Contact and Engagement Team to streamline the work in the CCR. A dedicated team of 12 staff and 2 supervisors were recruited. The team now manage 90% of the digital demand coming into CCR between the hours of 0700 – 2200hrs.

The core functions of the Digital Contact and Engagement Team is to:

- Manage public contact through the webchat service, extending the current provision and supporting an alternative to contacting the Constabulary by telephone.
- Process emails and other digital correspondence.
- Monitor the Constabularies social media channels and direct messaging identifying any reported issues such as reported crimes and key information.

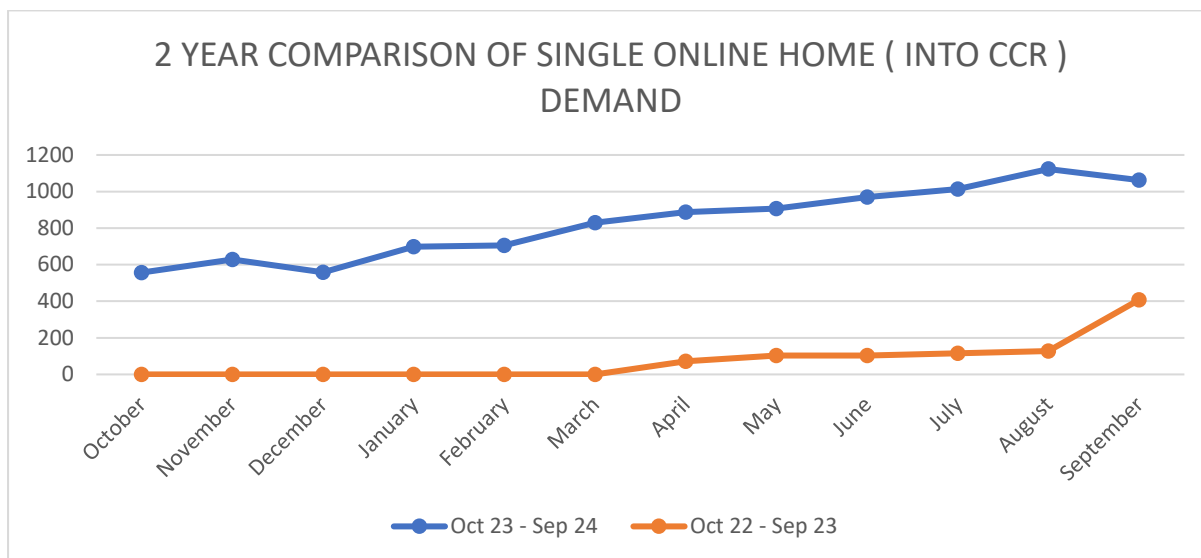
- 4.2 Between **1st October 2023 to 30th September 2024** the live chat service saw 11,301 users, (peaking in September 2024 with 1376 users). For 5 consecutive months there have been over 1200 users each month. The average time to be answered on live chat by a CCR Digital Contact and Engagement staff member was 18 seconds, with an abandon rate of 0.93%. 94% of users who completed a post-chat survey would recommend live chat and would use it again. 82% rated the service as very good. Digital Public Contact & Engagement Team will be evaluated after 12 months. Live chat data available for 2 years only.



5. SINGLE ONLINE HOME (SOH)

- 5.1 In November 2023, the Constabulary website was replaced by Single Online Home (SOH). Single Online Home is a digital platform that provides a virtual front door to police. SOH

facilitates contact with the Constabulary including the direct reporting of crime onto the police crime recording system (Athena), making firearms licencing applications, Freedom of Information requests and reporting Road Traffic Incidents. SOH also has contact forms that are directed into specific email accounts. Since November there has been a steady increase in the volume of contact events.



5.2 The introduction of Online Services is having a positive impact on 101 abandonment rates as it provides an alternative means to report crime and obtain information. This is monitored through the user's responses to online questions sets.

5.3 Since April 2023 emails into CCR have reduced as a direct correlation of the introduction of Single Online Home. Demand is directed, straight to the relevant department for actioning.

5.4 Single Online Home (SOH) within the Crime Coordination Centre (CCC) is now at a stage where all processes are embedded, maturing and working effectively. The Crime Coordination Centre retains around 60% of all SOH contact events reducing necessity for work to be disseminated to other departments.

6. RECRUITMENT

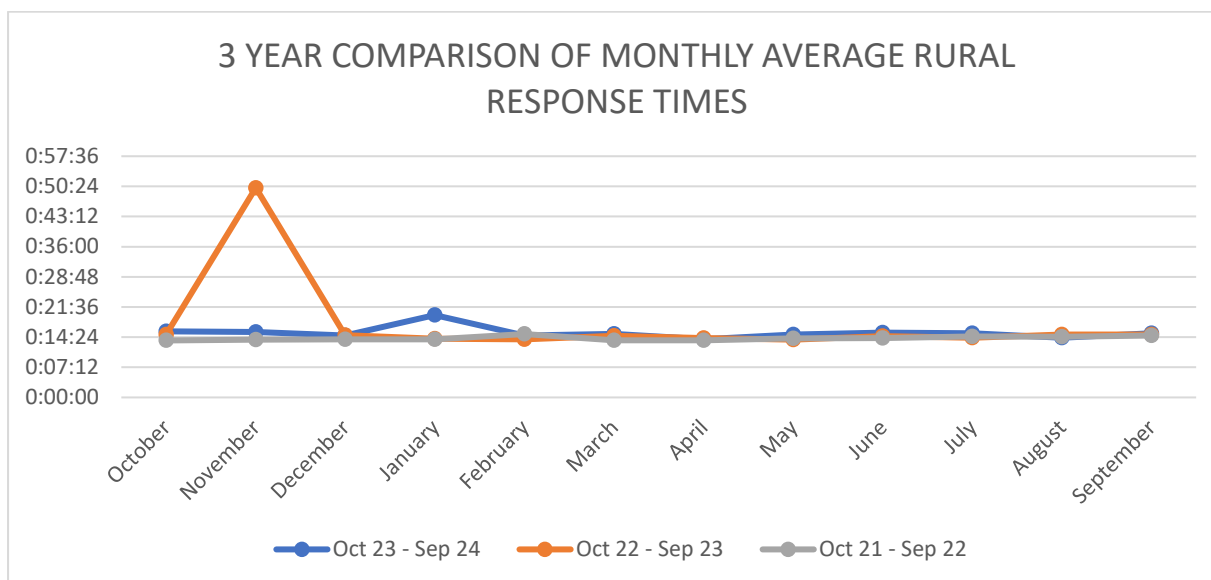
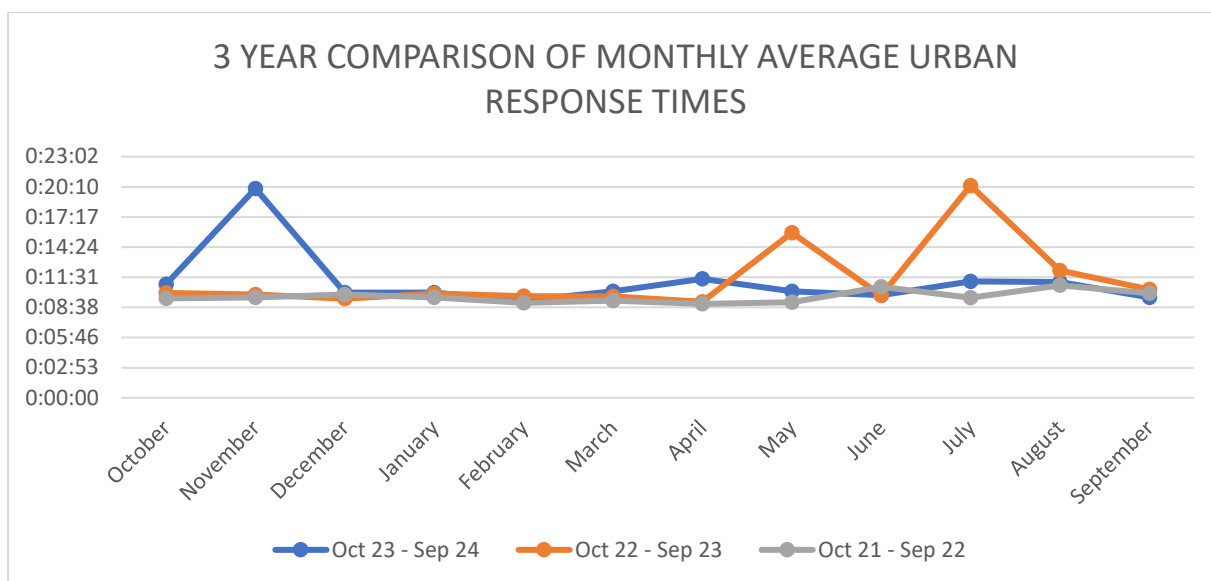
6.1 The Constabulary has continued with investment into the CCR transformation programme. 29 new operatives were employed into call handling with attrition tracking below the national average for call handling roles. New staff are supported and mentored by experienced tutors.

6.2 The Constabulary has modernised and streamlined the recruitment process to be accessible and efficient by developing an online version. The new 'online' process allows the candidates to directly book into assessment centres once eligibility has been achieved; such process has removed added layers of bureaucracy and paperwork. The CCR recruitment process has been praised by the College of Policing during a recent peer review and has been taken forward as best practice to be shared with other forces.

7. CALL GRADING & RESPONSE TIMES

7.1 Between **1st October 2023 to 30th September 2024** the monthly average time for attendance at Urban Grade A Incidents was 11 minutes 8 seconds, 13 seconds on average quicker than the previous year. Almost all months were within the target attendance time of 15 minutes except for November. The reason for this is a deployment where the officer attended but a failure to record this occurred. The target attendance of 20 minutes within a rural area was

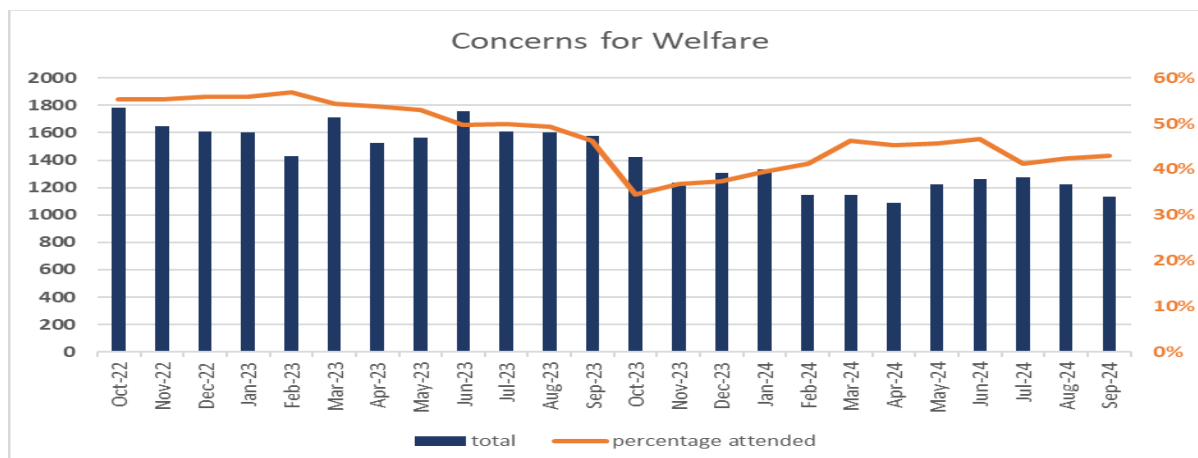
achieved each month with average timings of 15 minutes 26 seconds, 2 minutes and 1 second on average quicker than the previous year. In respect of rural incidents, the distance between locations is a key factor in arrival times. If a call is upgraded the time measured is not considered, this can automatically lead to a failure.



8. RIGHT CARE RIGHT PERSON (RCRP)

- 8.1 This section provides an update on RCRP, phase 3 of the CCR transformation programme.
- 8.2 Any changes to the Constabulary's internal policies in relation to RCRP have been shared in advance with the multi-agency working group, allowing time for reflection, dialogue and any wider changes to other organisational policies or procedures.
- 8.3 The below chart uses the criteria that Humberside Police adopted, which includes incidents that are categorised as 'Concern for Safety' or 'Mental Health related'. Since revising the Constabulary's approach and implementing RCRP there has been a steady decline in the number of calls for service indicating members of the public are accessing the correct service first time. The percentage of officer attendance has increased suggesting the calls into policing are now becoming more appropriate for a policing response. Based only on CAD timestamps (subject to data quality) this would indicate an average saving of 1,132 officer hours a month

as a result of RCRP implementation. These savings come in small pockets of time that are not solely attributable to one officer or one area. The savings are utilised in managing current demand and reflect in part in performance improvements such as arrival times. It is clear also that receiving fewer calls into the CCR has contributed to positive 101 performance 101 and reducing abandonment rate.



ANALYSIS PERIOD	CADS	CADS ATTENDED	% ATTENDED
OCT'22 - SEPT'23	19,415	10,286	53%
OCT;23 - SEPT'24	14,795	6,134	41%

- 8.4 The Constabulary, committed to continuous learning, have conducted an internal survey with CCR staff, focused on RCRP training and support. 89 % of the respondents fed back that they received sufficient support and supervision throughout the implementation.

9. DOMESTIC ABUSE VIDEO RESPONSE (DAVR)

- 9.1 The Constabulary has implemented the DAVR Team. The resourcing consists of 1 Sergeant, 3 Constables and 6 support staff investigators (the final investigators due to be in post by January 2025). There is clear criteria set outlining which domestic abuse calls can be dealt with in this format to ensure risk is effectively managed. Video technology is utilised to engage with victims reporting domestic abuse offering live time consultation and scheduled appointments. Victim satisfaction monitoring indicates over 90% of people surveyed to date preferred the digital contact methodology. Positive outcome rates are on par with direct contact outcomes with a positive improving trend.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 None.

11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

- 11.1 None

12. CHIEF OFFICER CONCLUSION

OFFICIAL

- 12.1 Suffolk Constabulary has shown its ability to adapt and offer new ways for customer contact, keeping pace with public trends in preferred communication. Whilst this period has represented an overall downturn in telephony demand, overall calls for service including digital contact remain consistent compared to the previous year. Positive performance indicators this period in time taken to answer 999 calls and ability to dispatch units effectively are contributing to a better service for Suffolk constituents and visitors.
- 12.2 101 has seen the most significant change where abandonment rates have halved from the previous year with additional improvement in average answer times.
- 12.3 Enhanced public access via the introduction of Single Online Home and the Digital Desk have increased flexibility and responsiveness to public needs. Whilst this does not represent a volume change in demand it does offer a variety of choice for service users, evident in the data. Furthermore, the Single online and Digital desk has taken the demand away from 999 and 101 Call Handlers affording more capacity to focus on core calls for service.
- 12.4 The Constabulary through the implementation of Right Care Right Person (RCRP) is now spending less time inappropriately dealing with mental and medical health non-emergency calls for service. This in turn enables enhanced focus for officers in delivering the Chief Constables plan. Further evaluation is underway and will be reported outside of the APP forum.