



SUFFOLK CONSTABULARY

ORIGINATOR: CHIEF CONSTABLE

PAPER NO: AP26/04

SUBMITTED TO: ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL –
16 JANUARY 2026

SUBJECT: RESPONDING TO CALLS FOR ASSISTANCE

SUMMARY:

1. This paper covers the reporting period from **1st October 2024 to 30th September 2025** to inform the public on Suffolk Constabulary's position on responding to calls for assistance to enhance both public confidence and public accessibility to Suffolk Constabulary.
2. The paper also continues to highlight the benefits of the investment that was made in the Command and Control Room and to ensure Suffolk Constabulary maintains excellent emergency response and call handling performance by continuing to use a range of alternative methods and channels to create greater public accessibility to Suffolk Constabulary.
3. Furthermore, this report also highlights the benefits of the Digital desk investment into both Digital desk and Suffolk Constabulary Domestic Abuse Video Response (DAVR) virtual rapid video response service in line with Suffolk Constabulary priority to tackle Domestic Abuse.

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.

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 Background: In October 2023 the Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy (PEEL) report from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) rated Suffolk Constabulary as 'inadequate' in how it responds to the public.

1.3 In 2022 an investment of 1.4 million uplift supported the constabulary to invest and develop this area of business. The Constabulary has made significant progress with call handling, recruitment of control room operators achieving national 999 call handling targets and reducing 101 abandonment rates. The change has seen the introduction of Right Care, Right Person (RCRP) and launching a suite of digital contact by introducing a Digital desk and Domestic Abuse Video Response (DAVR) by modernising Constabulary capability providing the public a wide range of contact options to contact the Police.

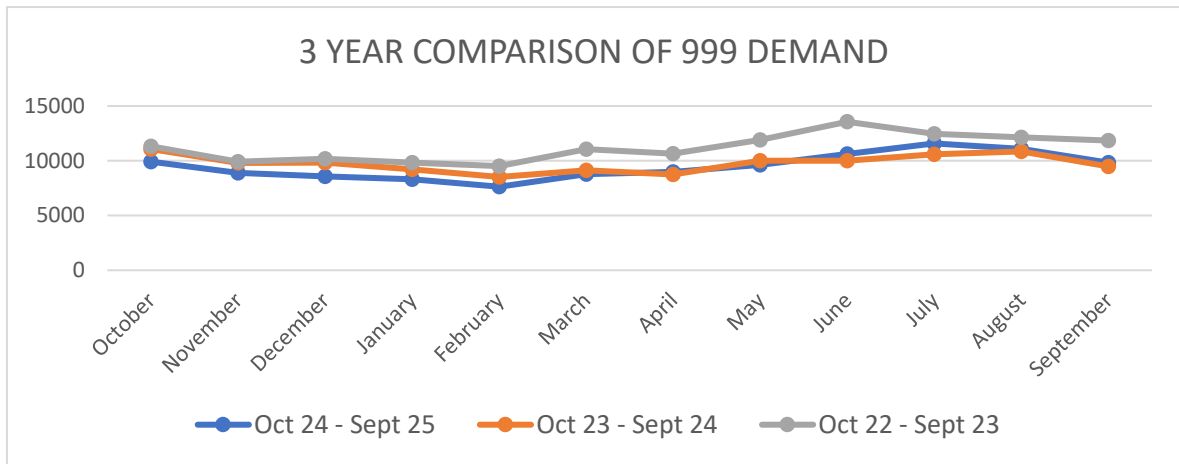
1.4 Throughout the 12-month period Suffolk Constabulary performance has continued to improve and has exceeded the target on answering 999 calls in 10 seconds or less. As a result of the improved and consistent performance, HMICFRS removed Suffolk Constabulary from being a cause for concern and performance continues to be very strong.

2. EMERGENCY CALL (999) PROCESS and DEMAND

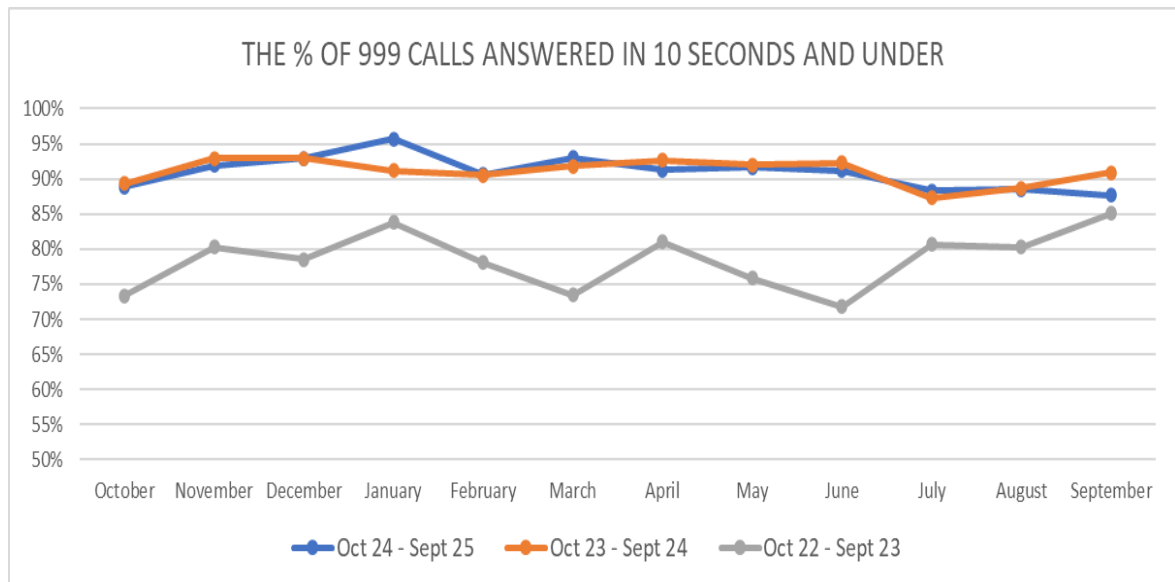
2.1 Suffolk Contact and Control Room (CCR) Call Handlers remain responsible for answering and handling both 999 and 101 calls. The number of 999 calls handled by the Constabulary between 2019 and 2022 increased significantly and has remained similar in the last two years.

2.2 Call Handlers continue to face a sustained level of demand. Call Handlers are balancing the need to respond to emergency 999 calls as a priority over non-emergency 101 calls. In addition, Call Handlers are taking more calls that involve vulnerable people, dealing with mental health concerns and other complex problems that across society; as a result, to mitigate risk Call Handlers require extra time to complete appropriate checks and manage complex calls, ensuring that our Thrive assessments (risk assessment tool) process is adhered to prioritising risk and demand.

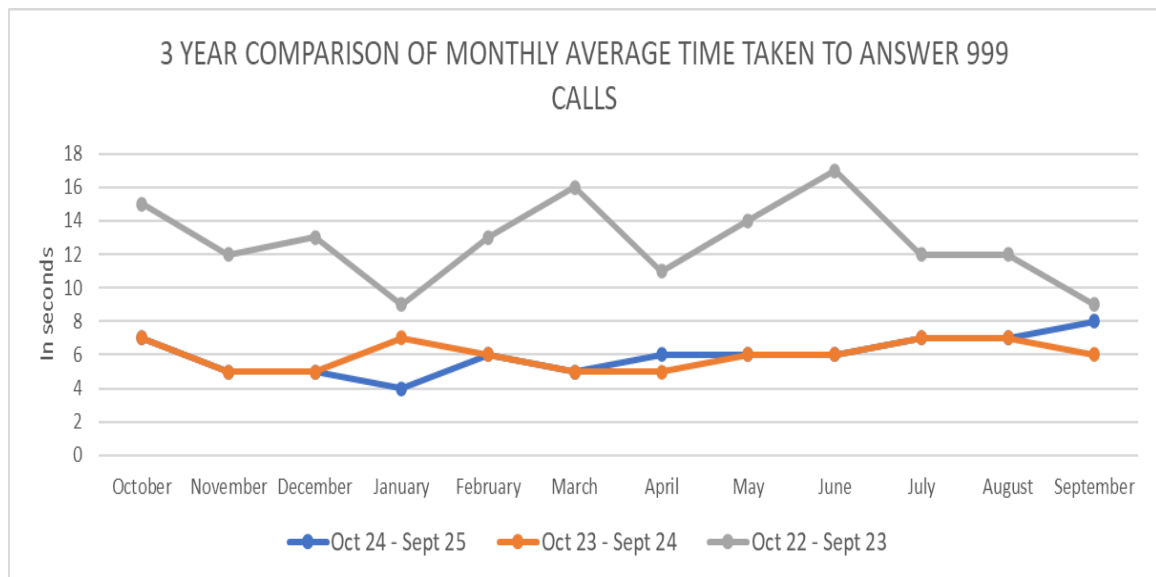
2.3 In the reporting period Suffolk Constabulary CCR received 113,835 '999' calls. This is similar to the previous reporting period but a significant decrease 2023/2024 and 2022/23.



2.4 The demand on the 999 service is 2.9% lower the previous year which in turn was 12.8% down on the year before that.



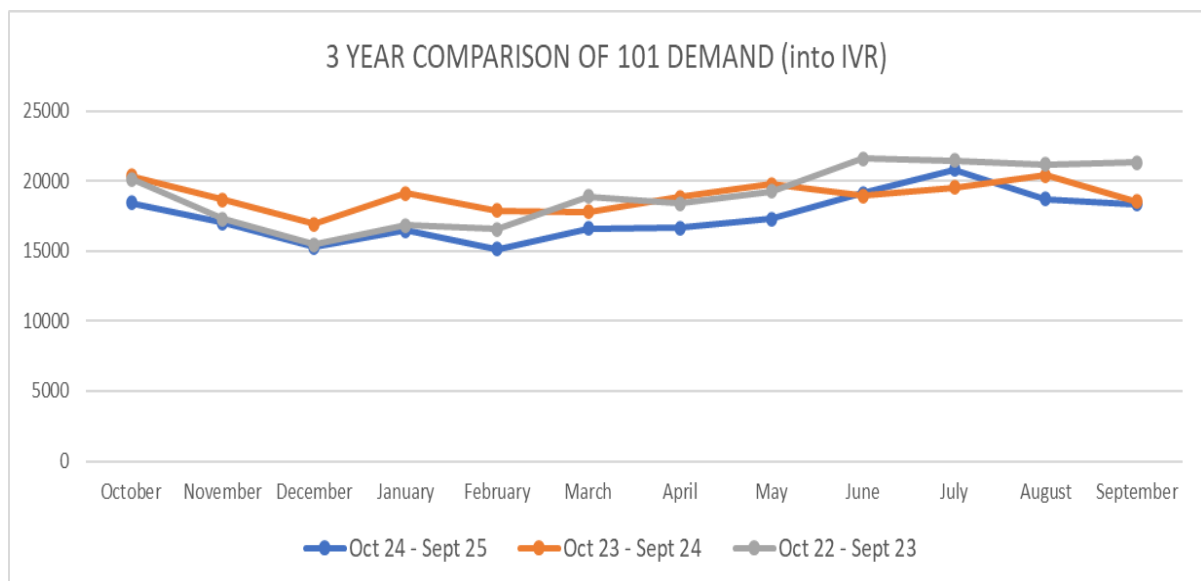
2.5 Suffolk has once again exceeded the national target of answering 90% of 999 calls within 10 seconds or under. The average is 91% across the period which is the same as the Oct 23- Sept 24 and far in excess of Oct 22 to Sept 23 which stood at 78.5%.

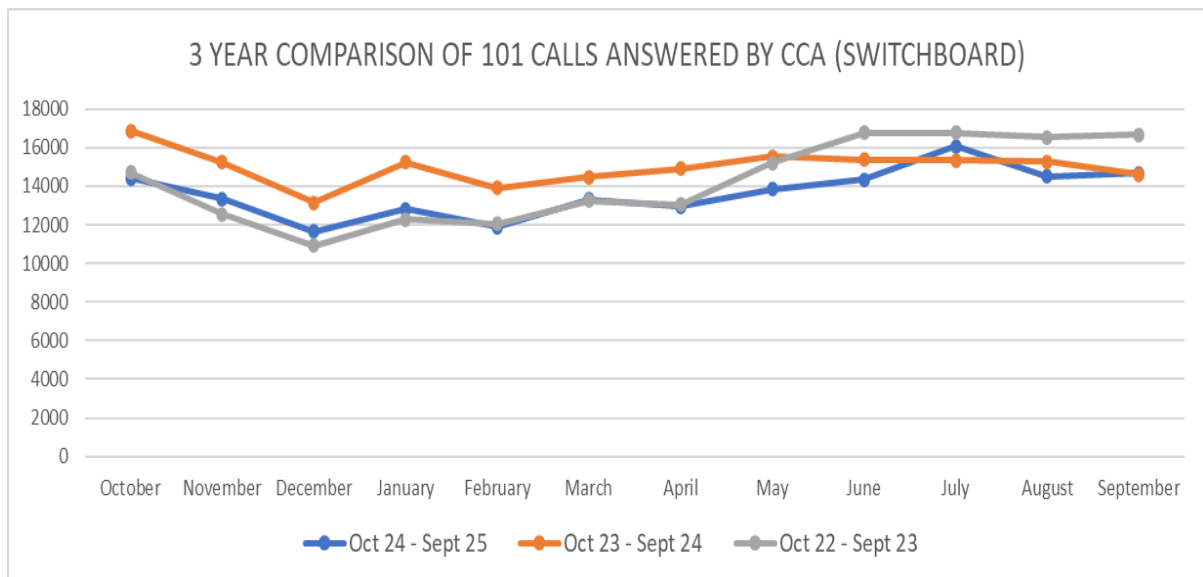


- 2.5.1 The average time to answer 999 calls has remained consistent with the previous year at 6 seconds, well beneath the 10 second target and a substantive improvement on the 22/23 year which averaged out at 12.75 seconds.

3. NON-EMERGENCY CALL (101) DEMAND

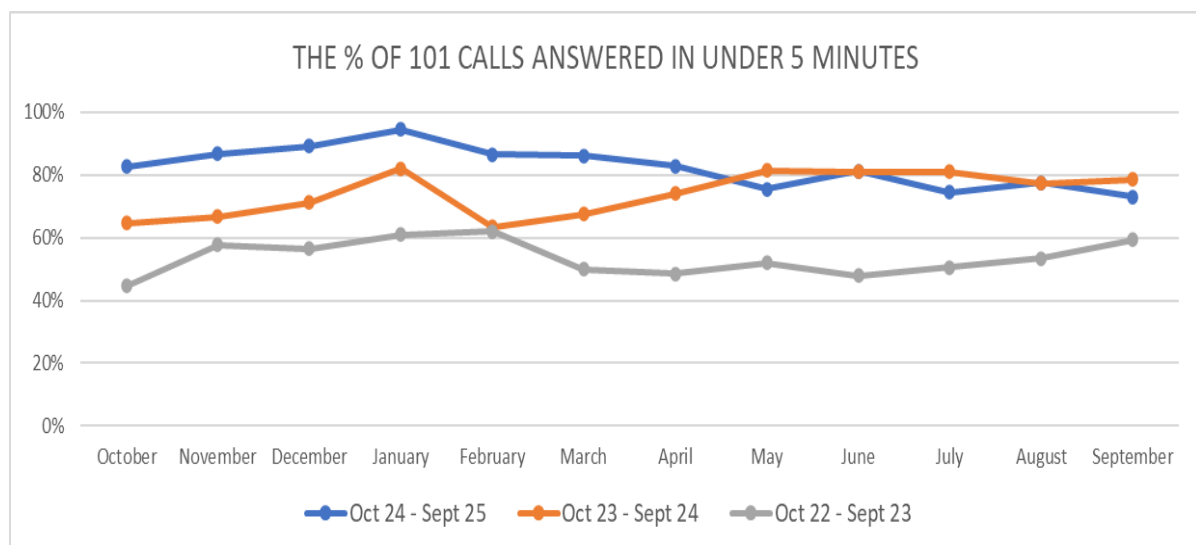
- 3.1 Suffolk Constabulary received 209,884 calls, a decrease of 7.4 % compared to the previous period. When dialling 101, callers are presented with a series of options. A number of these allow self-service via a voice recording menu of options via Interactive Voice Response (IVR). Of the 101 calls, 163,752 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. Increasing numbers 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.

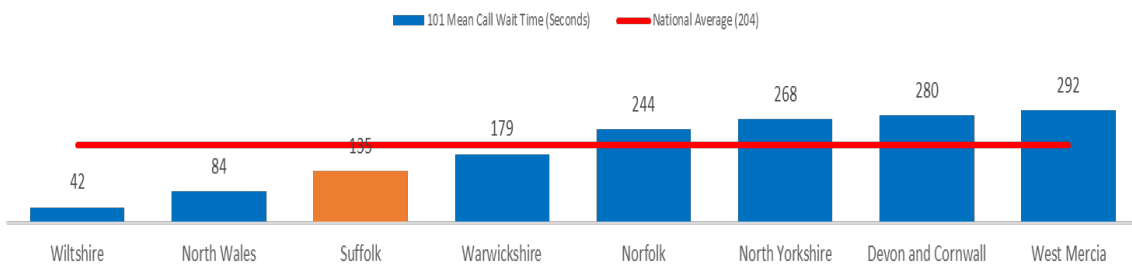
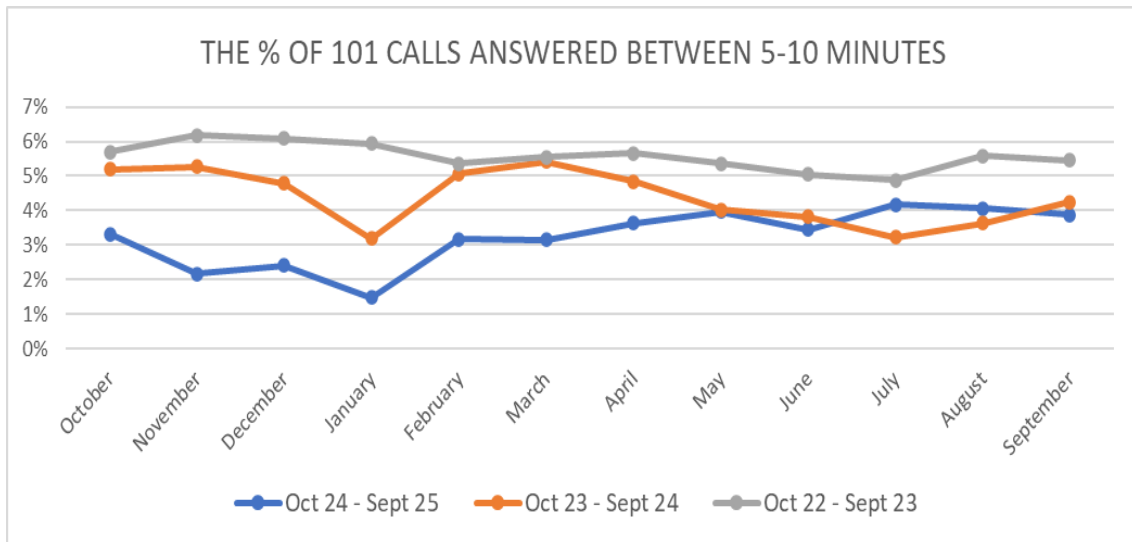




3.3 In this reporting period:-

- 82.4% of 101 calls were answered in under 5 minutes, an 8.2% improvement from the previous 12-month period.
- Over 85% of 101 calls were answered in under 10 minutes indicating strong performance year on year for handling times.
- Mean answer times on 101 compare favourably when considering our MSG's and the national average.





3.4 There is currently no national set standard for 101 call handling, the HMICFRS are looking for Forces to understand their abandonment rate and are looking to consistently reduce it. The Constabulary is part of the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) 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 a national platform to inform Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) for 101 call handling and abandonment rates. All forces have now published their data www.police.uk, alongside a narrative for each force explaining their service delivery as there are many interdependencies which impact handling times.

3.5 There are two types of abandonment rates measured for 101 calls.

- short (under 30 seconds)
- 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. Callers are then presented with a variety of options to report incidents online except for Mental Health and Public Safety matters 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.

3.6 The Constabulary publishes the combined short and long abandonment rate. There has been a continued decrease in abandonment rates compared to previous years, potentially reflective of additional caller options, enhanced staffing, changes to policy and procedure as well as more users opting for a digital channel option.

Yearly 101 abandonment rate Combined	Apr 25 - Sept 25	Apr 24 - Mar 25	Apr 23 - Mar 24
	9.5%	11.1%	28.1%

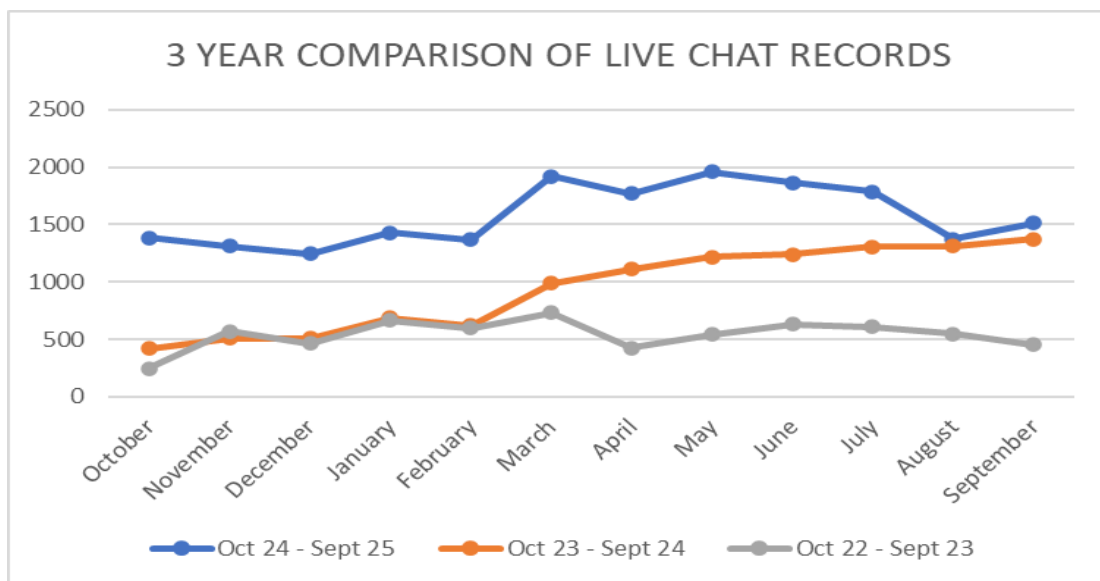
- 3.7 It is hypothesised that with short abandonments, service users are increasingly opting to utilise digital platforms rather than to wait in a call queue. Systems analysis does not allow data interrogation therefore both short and long abandonment are combined when examining abandonment. The Constabulary is part of a national working group to exploring options to review and monitor the data in greater detail to enhance data literacy nationally and locally.

4. DIGITAL CONTACT AND ENGAGEMENT TEAM

- 4.1 Prior to the launch of the CCR Digital Contact and Engagement Team (DigiDesk) all emails, live chat and 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. The team consists of a dedicated team of 12 staff and 2 supervisors. DigiDesk team members manage 90% of the digital demand coming into CCR between the hours of 0700 – 2200hrs reducing demand in the main control room.

The core functions of the Digital Contact and Engagement Team are:

- Public contact through webchat, extending the current provision and supporting alternative contacting with Constabulary by telephone.
 - Process emails and other digital correspondence.
 - Monitor Constabulary social media channels and direct messaging.
- 4.2 In this reporting period the live chat service saw 18,920 users, an increase of 67% on the previous year. There has been an average of over 1500 users of live chat per month during this period, demonstrating increasing demand. The average time to respond on live chat by DigiDesk team was 7 seconds, with an abandon rate of 0.3%. A significant majority of users rate our live chat service as Very Good or Good, measured by completing a post-chat survey (not mandatory).

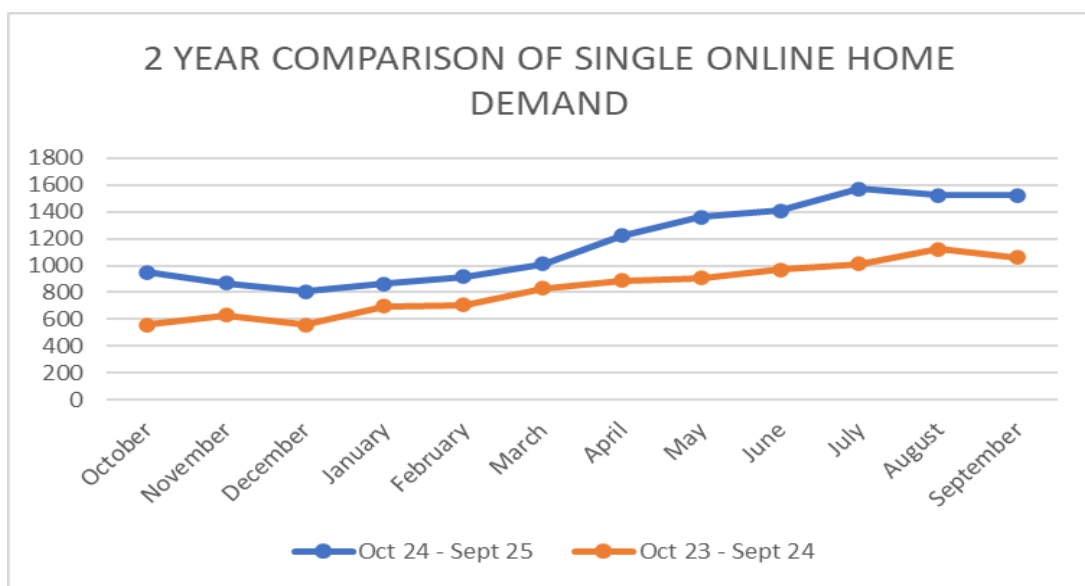


- 4.3 To get best value from its investment the Constabulary proactively reviewed the DigiDesk capacity in January 2025. The Constabulary subsequently introduced changes:

- Taking on a strand of Single Online demand from the Crime coordination.
- Developed capability to create intelligence reports
- Enhanced collaborative working with the Constabulary Corporate Comms team to enhance and support media messaging
- Assisting the main call centre in the closure of pending Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD's) where appropriate

5. SINGLE ONLINE HOME (SOH)

- 5.1 In November 2023, the Constabulary website was replaced by Single Online Home (SOH) a digital contact platform. SOH facilitates contact with the Constabulary including direct reporting of matters and crime auto generated onto the police crime recording system (Athena). Firearms licensing applications, Freedom of Information requests and reporting Road Traffic Incidents can be received. SOH has contact forms additionally directed into specific email accounts. Volume demand has remained consistent over the period and consistently above the previous year.



- 5.2 The introduction of Online Services appears to have had a positive impact on 101 abandonment rates through alternative crime reporting methods and information access. This continues to be monitored through user responses to online questions sets.

6. RECRUITMENT

- 6.1 The Constabulary has continued to invest into the CCR as part of the transformation programme. There have been two recruitment intakes a year to ensure a supply of new staff into the room with consideration being made to move to four smaller intakes to ensure consistent levels of staffing. The Digi Team has a particularly low staff turnover rate, which is reflected in the high performance of the team.
- 6.2 The Constabulary has modernised and streamlined the recruitment process to be accessible and efficient. The 'online' process allows candidates to directly book into assessment centres once eligibility has been achieved. Diversity and inclusion are a key part of recruitment processes to ensure Suffolk Constabulary is reflective of the communities we serve. Our recruitment practice has been recognised as positive by inspections and other agencies.

7. CALL GRADING & RESPONSE TIMES

- 7.1 **Urban Grade A** (Target attendance 15 minutes). Through the period the Constabulary had an average time, well within the target, of 8 minutes 43 seconds and on average 20 seconds quicker than the previous year.

Rural Grade A (Target attendance of 20 minutes). Through the period the Constabulary had average timings of 14 minutes 7 seconds, also an improvement on the previous year.

Note: In respect of rural incidents, the distance between locations is a key factor in arrival times.

B1s (Target up to 60 mins) The Constabulary ended the period with an average arrival time 44 mins and 20 seconds, a slight increase on the previous period, but still well within the target.

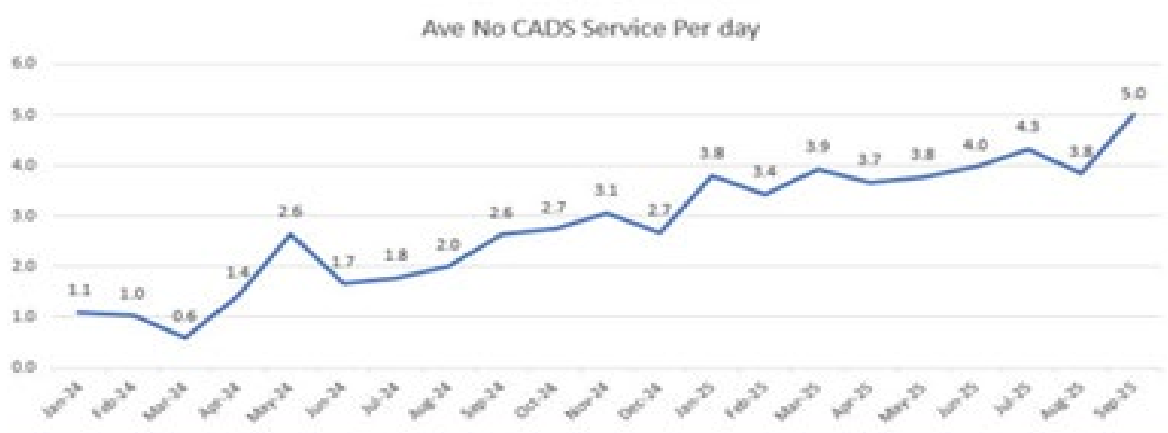
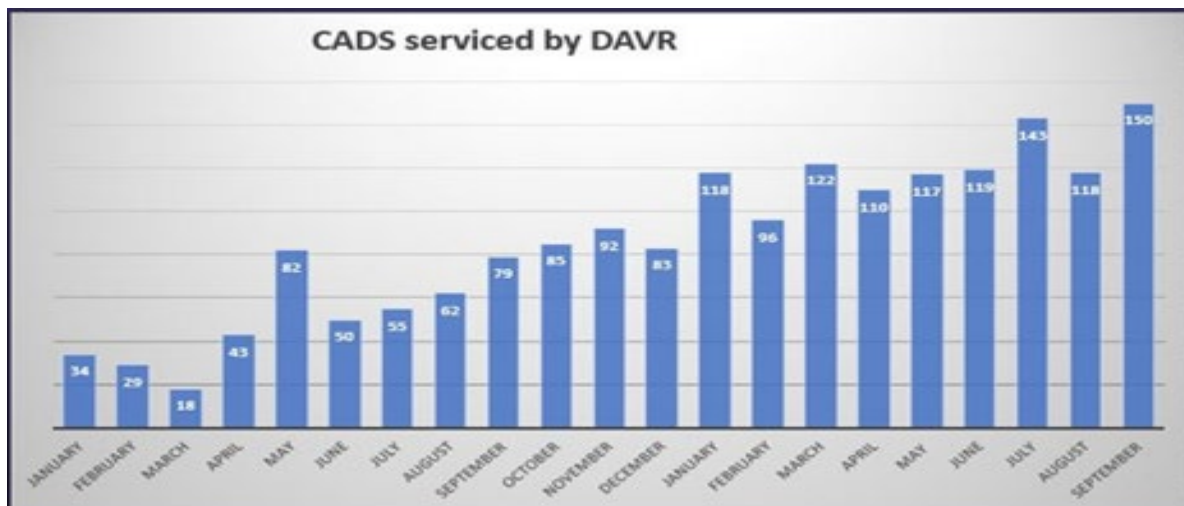
B2s (Target to arrive within 24 hours) The Constabulary ended the period with an average arrival time was 12hrs and 11 minutes, which is an increase on the previous period but again well within the target.

8. RIGHT CARE RIGHT PERSON (RCRP)

- 8.1 RCRP has now embedded into the Constabulary to the point where it is treated as Business As Usual (BAU). Performance is still monitored with data provided by the Suffolk Office of Data & Analytics (SODA).
- 8.2 The number of referrals made by Suffolk Constabulary has been steady. In 2025, up to the end of August, there were 5025 incidents attended, with 1148 resolved remotely and 7478 referrals made
- 8.3 The time savings have been put back into the Control Room and enable the stronger performance demonstrated on the 999 answer rate and the reducing 101 abandonment rate.
- 8.4 The Constabulary is committed to continuous learning and developing and works closely with partners to ensure the most appropriate service responds to the public's needs.

9. DOMESTIC ABUSE VIDEO RESPONSE (DAVR)

- 9.1 In January 2024 Constabulary implemented the DAVR Team. The team consists of 1 Sergeant, 3 Constables and 6 support staff investigators. The final wave of investigators joined in January 2025. Each Domestic Abuse call is risk assessed to ensure suitability for DAVR. The team engage with victims utilising video technology offering 'live' time consultation and scheduled appointment options.
- 9.2 This initiative continues to grow and is seeing a steady increase in the number of calls that are serviced this way. This provides victims of domestic crime with the opportunity to speak to an officer quicker than otherwise would happen with physical attendance. This is done with the support of the victim, anyone wishing to be seen in person will still have that option.



10. ENGAGEMENT.

- 10.1** The Constabulary is continuously seeking to improve and innovate. We are linked in with both National and regional leads and closely engage with the Eastern Regional Innovation Network learning about new opportunities, research, learning to improve and modernise local practices and processes to create further efficiencies and effective processes.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1** None.

12. OTHER IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

- 12.1** None.

13. CHIEF OFFICER CONCLUSION

- 13.1** Suffolk Constabulary has delivered significant improvements in public contact services during the reporting period (October 2024 – September 2025), following a £1.4 million investment in its Command and Control Room. Emergency (999) call handling exceeded national standards, with 91% of calls answered within 10 seconds and an average response time of just 6 seconds. Non-emergency (101) services also improved markedly, with

abandonment rates reduced from 28.1% to 9.5% and 82.4% of calls answered within five minutes.

- 13.2 Digital transformation has played a key role in these gains. The launch of the Digital Desk (DigiDesk) and Single Online Home (SOH) has enabled faster, more flexible contact options, including live chat and online reporting. DigiDesk now manages 90% of digital demand with a 7-second average response time and exceptional user satisfaction. Innovative services such as Domestic Abuse Video Response (DAVR) and the Right Care Right Person (RCRP) initiative have further enhanced accessibility and efficiency, ensuring victims and vulnerable individuals receive timely and appropriate support. These developments demonstrate Suffolk Constabulary's commitment to modernising public contact and delivering a responsive, accessible service for all.