



SUFFOLK CONSTABULARY

ORIGINATOR: CHIEF CONSTABLE

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**SUBMITTED TO: ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL –
10 JULY 2026**

SUBJECT: RESPONDING TO CALLS FOR ASSISTANCE

SUMMARY:

1. This paper covers the reporting period from 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026 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 delivery of the Police and Crime Plan commitments to:

- Build on the investment in the Command and Control Room, to ensure it maintains excellent emergency response and call-handling performance, utilising a range of alternative channels for reporting crime and contacting the police.
- Monitor the impact of investments in the Digital Desk and Rapid Video Response

1.2 Over the past four years, the Contact and Control Room (CCR) has sustained performance in call handling while modernising its service offer. This has included the introduction of a dedicated Digital Team and the Domestic Abuse Video Response (DAVR) Team, providing additional and more flexible channels for public contact and improving the management of demand.

1.3 The department continues to deliver strong performance, with a consistent focus on providing a reliable and accessible service to the public, particularly at times of need.

1.4 Investment in ICT infrastructure, including upgrades to the Command and Control system, has improved information sharing across partner agencies and enabled more efficient routing of calls to the most appropriate service. Further development is underway to explore the use of new systems and technology to support service delivery, quality of service for members of the public contacting the Constabulary and enabling call handlers to focus on priority demand.

2. EMERGENCY CALL (999) PROCESS and DEMAND

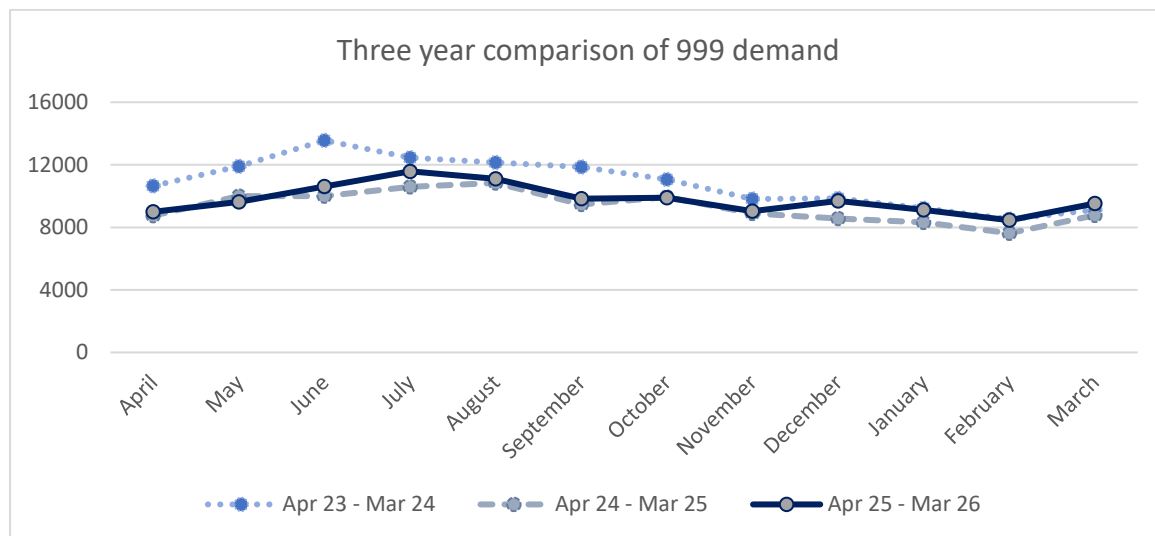
2.1 Suffolk Contact and Control Room (CCR) Call Handlers are responsible for managing both emergency (999) and non-emergency (101) demand. The volume of 999 calls has remained broadly stable over the past three years.

2.2 Demand remains consistently high, with Call Handlers prioritising emergency calls while maintaining service across non-emergency demand. Increasingly, calls involve individuals with vulnerabilities, including mental health concerns and complex social factors. These calls require additional time to assess and manage risk effectively, with THRIVE assessments applied to ensure appropriate prioritisation and safeguarding.

2.3 Between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026, Suffolk Constabulary received 117,452 emergency (999) calls. This represents a 3.2% increase compared with the previous 12-month reporting period, although volumes remain lower than those recorded in 2023/24.

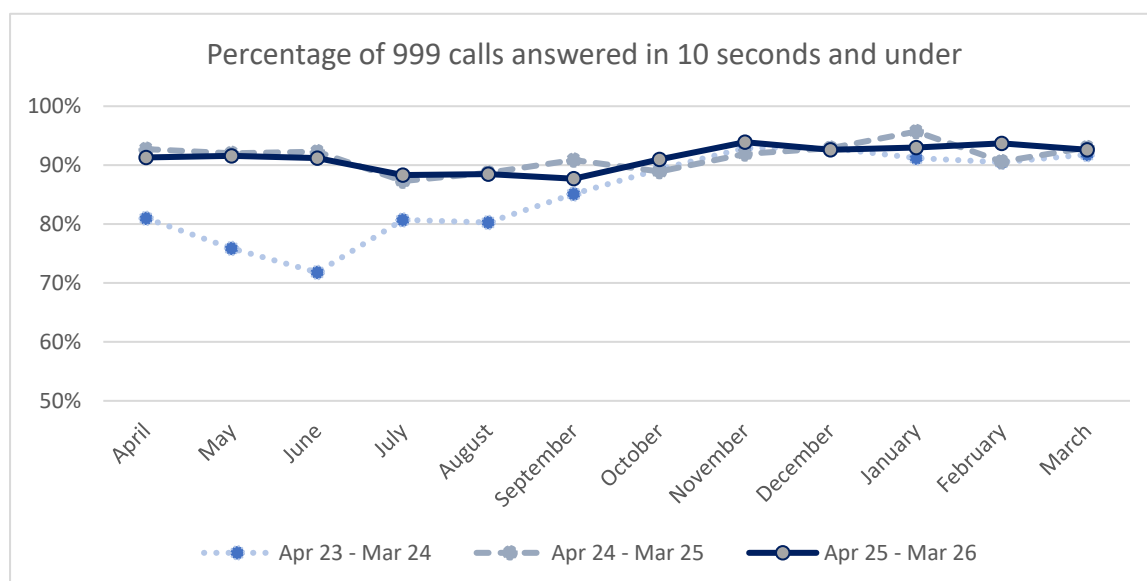
2.4 Overall demand across the April–March period is 5.1% higher than the previous year, but 9.8% lower than 2023/24, indicating relative stability in demand following a peak in earlier years. As shown in Figure 1, monthly demand patterns remain broadly consistent across the three-year period.

Figure 1: Monthly 999 Call Demand – Three-Year Comparison (April 2023 to March 2026)



2.5 The Constabulary has continued to exceed the national standard to answer 90% of 999 calls within 10 seconds, achieving 91.3% over the reporting period. This is consistent with the previous year (91.4%) and represents a sustained improvement from 2023/24 (85.3%). Figure 2 demonstrates sustained performance above the national standard across the reporting period.

Figure 2: Percentage of 999 Calls Answered Within 10 Seconds (April 2023 to March 2026)



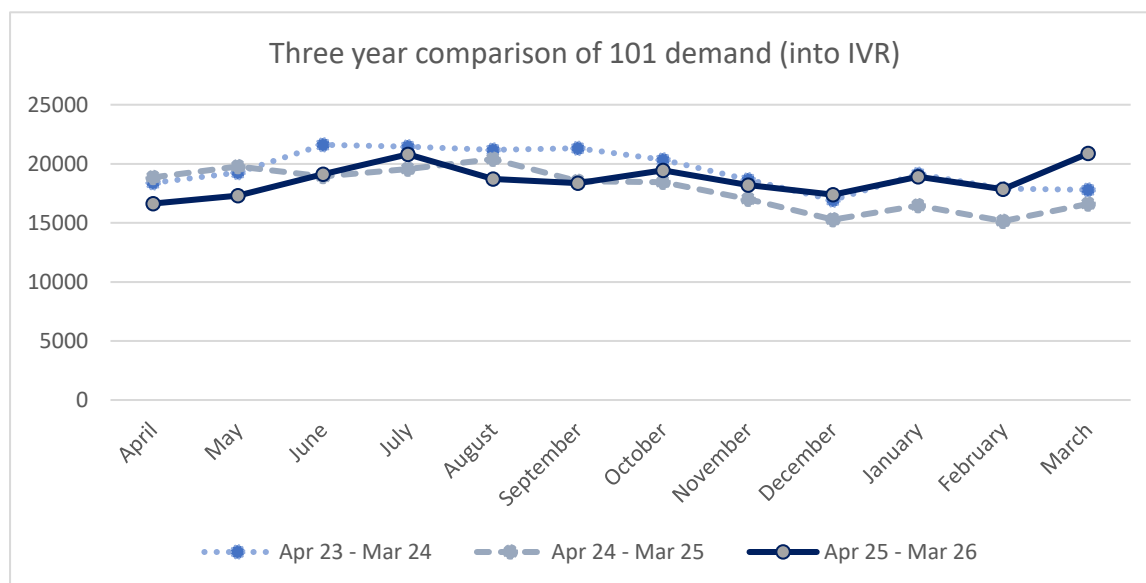
2.6 The average time to answer 999 calls remains at 6 seconds, consistent with the previous year and significantly below the 10-second national standard. This represents an improvement from 2023/24, where the average response time was 9 seconds.

2.7 This performance indicates that, despite sustained and increasingly complex demand, CCR continues to deliver a timely and effective emergency response service.

3. NON-EMERGENCY CALL (101) DEMAND

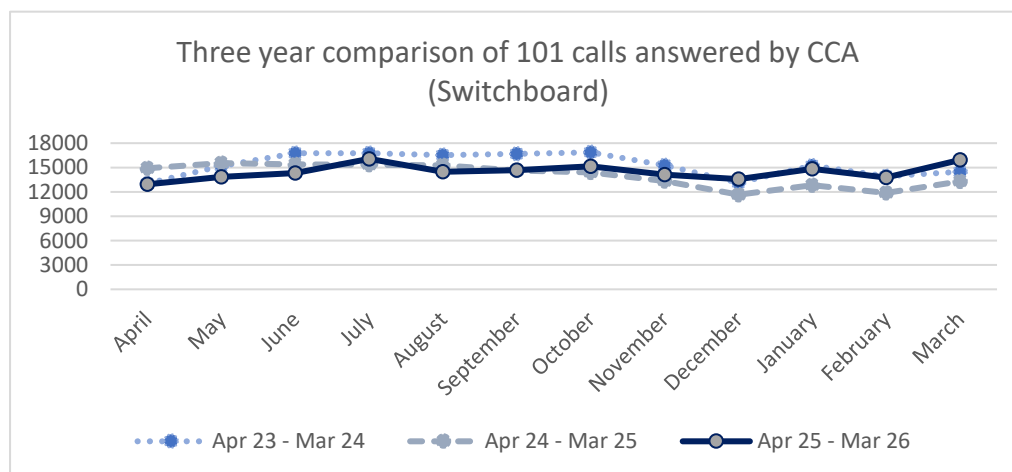
- 3.1 Suffolk Constabulary received 223,592 non-emergency (101) calls during the reporting period, representing a 6.5% increase compared with the previous 12 months. As shown in Figure 3, monthly 101 demand has remained consistently high, with an increase in the current reporting period. When contacting 101, callers are initially offered a range of self-service options via an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system. Of these calls, 173,728 (77.7%) progressed beyond IVR and required handling by a call handler within the Central Call Answering (CCA) Team, an increase of 6.1% on the previous year.

Figure 3: Monthly 101 Call Demand (IVR) – Three-Year Comparison (April 2023 to March 2026)



- 3.2 This increase in demand reflects continued reliance on telephony contact, alongside growing complexity in call types. As with emergency demand, a proportion of calls involve vulnerability, safeguarding, and partner agency issues, which can extend call handling time and impact queue performance. Figure 4 illustrates the volume of calls requiring handling by the Central Call Answering (CCA) team.

Figure 4: Monthly 101 Calls Answered by CCA (Three-Year Comparison)



- 3.3 Performance against timeliness has reduced slightly compared with the previous year. During the reporting period:
- 78.3% of 101 calls were answered within 5 minutes (down from 83.2%)
 - 82.2% were answered within 10 minutes
- 3.4 This reduction reflects increased demand and call complexity, with a continued focus on managing all types of contact demand. Figure 5 demonstrates the reduction in timeliness performance compared to the previous reporting period.

Figure 5: Percentage of 101 Calls Answered Within 5 Minutes (April 2023 to March 2026)

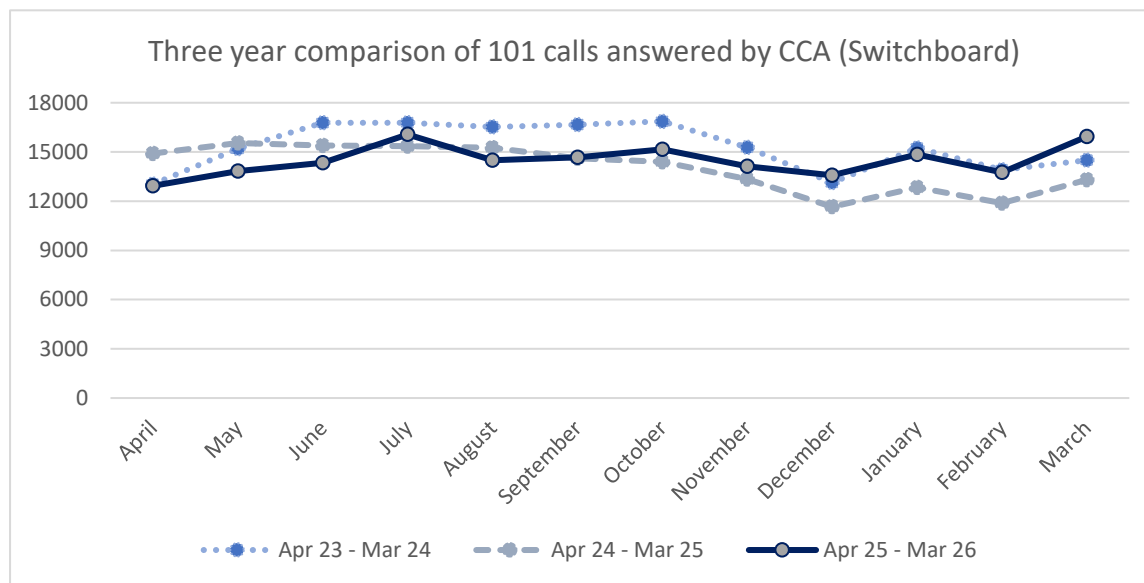


Figure 5 illustrates a reduction in timeliness performance compared to the previous year.

National Context and Benchmarking

- 3.5 There is currently no nationally mandated performance standard for 101 call handling. However, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) expects forces to understand and reduce call abandonment rates as a key indicator of accessibility and service quality.
- 3.6 Suffolk Constabulary is an active member of the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) Contact Management Working Group, contributing to the development of the National Contact Management Strategy, including future standards and performance measures. All forces now publish 101 performance data on *police.uk*, supported by local narrative to reflect the wider factors influencing demand and service delivery.

Figure 6: Most Similar Group Comparison – 101 Mean Call Wait Time (March 2026)

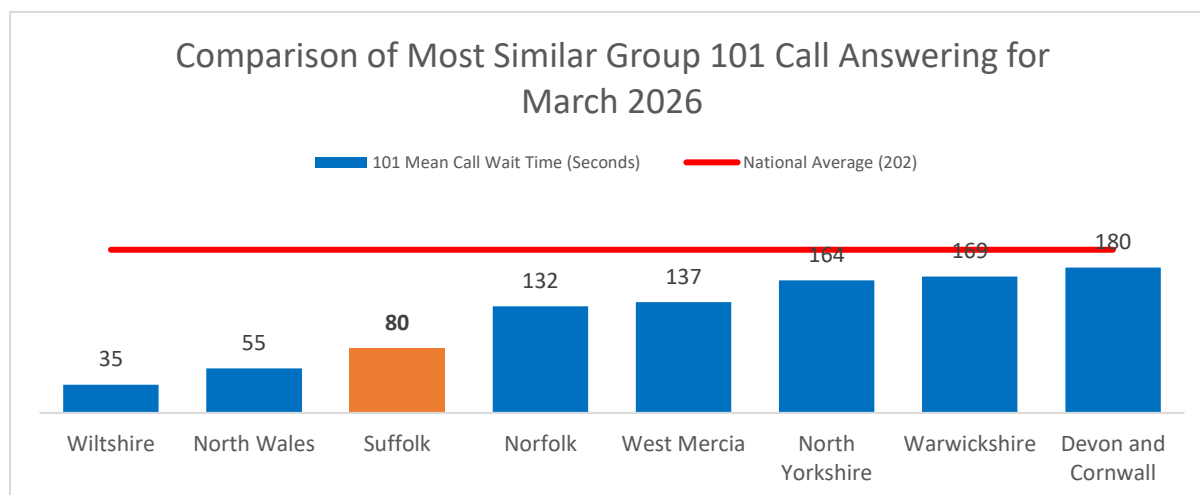


Figure 6 shows Suffolk's relative position within its Most Similar Group for call wait times.

Abandonment Definitions and Context

3.7 Abandonment rates are measured across two categories:

- short abandonment (under 30 seconds)
- long abandonment (over 30 seconds)

3.8 When a caller dials 101, they are first presented with a Recorded Announcement Device (RAD), offering options including digital reporting and signposting emergency demand to 999 where appropriate. This supports access to services and demand management but can also influence abandonment rates, as some callers opt for alternative channels before speaking to an operator.

Abandonment Performance

3.9 The Constabulary publishes a combined abandonment rate. Following improvements driven by increased staffing and process changes, abandonment rates reduced significantly and have since stabilised. In the current reporting period, there has been a small increase, from 13.9% to 14.6%, reflecting the rise in demand.

Figure 7: 101 Call Abandonment rate 2023-2026

Year	101 Call Abandonment Rate
Apr 2023 – Mar 2024	35.6%
Apr 2024 – Mar 2025	13.9%
Apr 2025 – Mar 2026	14.6%

3.10 A proportion of short abandonment is likely attributable to callers choosing to use digital channels rather than remain in a queue. Current system capability limits detailed analysis of user behaviour; however, the Constabulary is working with national partners to improve data insight and develop a more detailed understanding of abandonment drivers.

3.11 Overall, demand, call complexity, and the availability of alternative contact channels continue to influence 101 performance, and work remains ongoing to improve both service accessibility and understanding of user behaviour.

3.12 The increasing use of digital channels, alongside sustained telephony demand, highlights the importance of providing multiple access routes to meet public need.

4. DIGITAL CONTACT AND ENGAGEMENT TEAM

4.1 Prior to March 2024, all digital contact demand, including email, live chat, and online enquiries, was managed within the Contact and Control Room (CCR). The introduction of the Digital Contact and Engagement Team (DigiDesk) has created dedicated capacity to manage this demand more effectively and reduce pressure on core call-handling functions.

4.2 The DigiDesk consists of 12 staff and 2 supervisors and manages approximately 90% of digital demand received by CCR between 07:00 and 22:00. This includes:

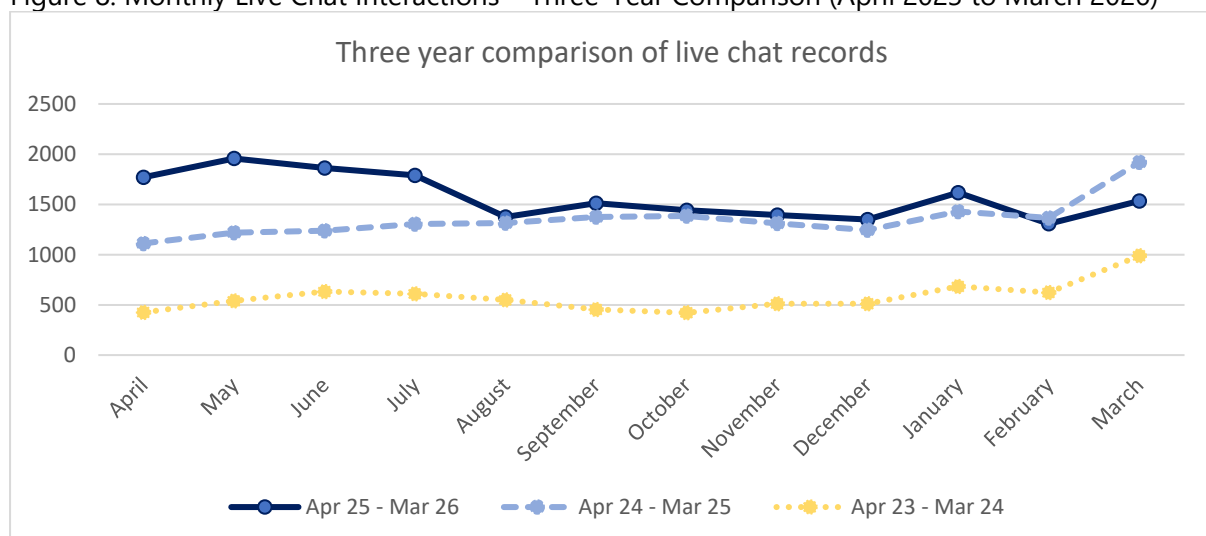
- public contact via live chat, providing an alternative to telephony contact
- processing email and digital correspondence
- monitoring and responding to Constabulary social media channels

4.3 This has enabled a more structured and responsive approach to digital engagement, improving accessibility while supporting demand management within CCR.

4.4 During the reporting period, the live chat service recorded 18,911 user interactions, broadly consistent with the previous period and representing a 16.6% increase compared with April 2024 – March 2025. This equates to an average of over 1,500 interactions per month, demonstrating sustained demand for digital contact channels.

4.5 This reflects continued public adoption of alternative contact methods, supporting the shift away from traditional telephony where appropriate. As shown in Figure 8, demand for live chat services has remained consistently high, with an upward trend compared to previous years.

Figure 8: Monthly Live Chat Interactions – Three-Year Comparison (April 2023 to March 2026)

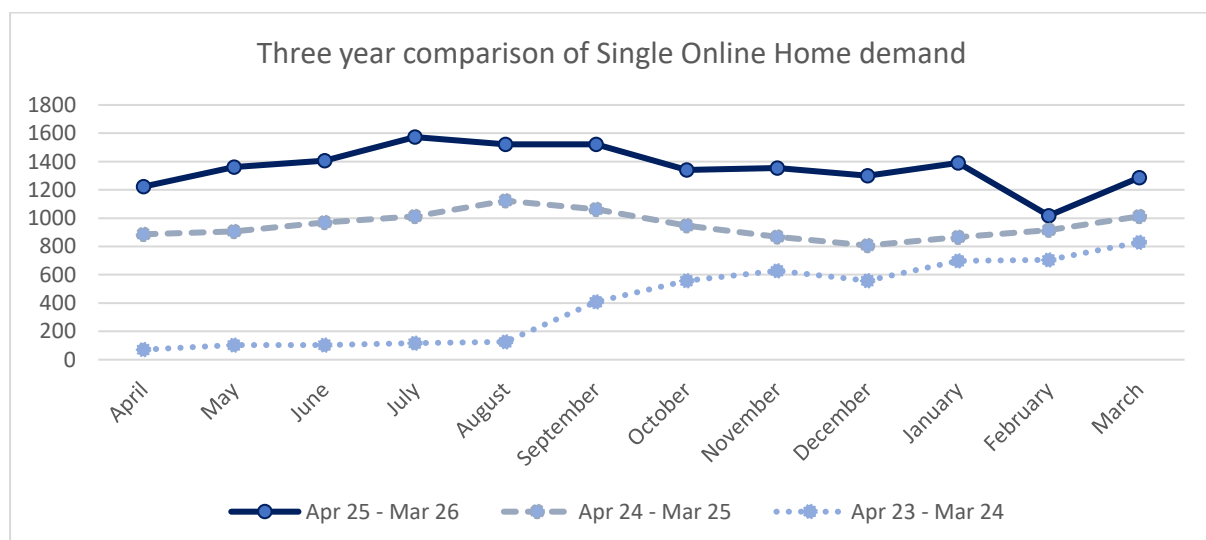


- 4.6 In January 2025, a review of DigiDesk capacity and utilisation was undertaken to ensure that the Constabulary maximised the value of its investment. As a result, the role and capability of the team have been further developed, including:
- taking on elements of Single Online Home (SOH) demand from the Crime Coordination Centre
 - developing the capability to create intelligence reports from digital interactions
 - strengthening collaboration with Corporate Communications to support media messaging and public engagement
 - supporting the closure of Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) incidents where appropriate
- 4.7 These developments have broadened the contribution of DigiDesk beyond initial contact handling, enabling it to support wider operational and organisational priorities. Work will continue to expand digital capability to ensure it remains aligned with public demand and supports further reduction in telephony-based demand.

5. SINGLE ONLINE HOME (SOH)

- 5.1 In November 2023, the Constabulary implemented Single Online Home (SOH) as its primary digital contact platform, replacing the previous website. SOH enables the public to access services and report incidents directly, including crime recording, firearms licensing applications, Freedom of Information requests, and road traffic incident reporting. Reports submitted via SOH are integrated into core policing systems, including Athena.
- 5.2 Demand for SOH services has remained consistently high throughout the reporting period and continues to exceed levels seen in the previous year, reflecting increased public use of digital channels. As shown in Figure 9, demand for SOH services has remained consistently high and above previous-year levels.

Figure 9: Monthly Single Online Home (SOH) Demand – Three-Year Comparison (April 2023 to March 2026)



- 5.3 The expansion of online services has provided an effective alternative to telephony-based contact and is assessed to have contributed to managing 101 demand, including supporting lower abandonment in earlier periods. However, demand across both online and telephony channels continues to increase, indicating overall growth in public contact rather than substitution.
- 5.4 User feedback mechanisms are in place to monitor the quality and usability of online services, ensuring that the platform continues to meet public expectations and support accessible service delivery. This reinforces the importance of maintaining a blended contact model across both digital and telephony channels.

6. RECRUITMENT

- 6.1 The Constabulary has continued to invest in the Contact and Control Room (CCR) as part of its wider transformation programme. Four recruitment intakes have been completed during the reporting period to maintain staffing levels and mitigate the impact of consistent turnover. This approach has supported the maintenance of operational resilience across both telephony and digital demand.
- 6.2 Staff retention within the Digital Contact and Engagement Team (DigiDesk) remains strong, providing continuity and supporting stable service delivery within digital channels.
- 6.3 Recruitment processes have been modernised to improve accessibility and efficiency, including the introduction of an online application process enabling candidates to progress more quickly through to assessment. Diversity and inclusion continue to be embedded within recruitment activity, with a focus on ensuring that the workforce reflects the communities served.
- 6.4 The Constabulary's recruitment approach has been positively recognised through inspection and external review, providing assurance that processes are fair, proportionate, and aligned with best practice.

7. CALL GRADING & RESPONSE TIMES

- 7.1 The Constabulary has maintained strong performance against response time targets across all call grading categories during the reporting period (April 2025 – March 2026), with average attendance times remaining within target thresholds.

For emergency incidents:

- Urban Grade A calls (target: 15 minutes) recorded an average attendance time of 9 minutes 26 seconds.
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- Rural Grade A calls (target: 20 minutes) recorded an average attendance time of 13 minutes 42 seconds.

In rural locations, travel distances and geography remain key factors influencing response times.

For priority incidents:

- Grade B1 calls (target: within 60 minutes) recorded an average attendance time of 47 minutes 4 seconds. This represents an increase compared with the previous year but remains within the set target.
- Grade B2 calls (target: within 24 hours) recorded an average attendance time of 12 hours 9 minutes, remaining well within target parameters.

7.2 Overall, response performance remains within expected standards across all grading categories, despite sustained demand and increasing complexity of incidents.

8. RIGHT CARE RIGHT PERSON (RCRP)

8.1 Right Care Right Person (RCRP) is now fully embedded within the Constabulary's operating model and is delivered as business as usual. Performance continues to be monitored, with data provided through the Suffolk Office of Data and Analytics (SODA).

8.2 The number of RCRP-related incidents has remained stable during the reporting period. A total of 13,058 incidents were recorded, of which 6,053 (46.4%) required police attendance.

8.3 The implementation of RCRP has supported more appropriate allocation of demand across partner agencies. This has enabled police resources to be focused on incidents requiring a policing response and is considered to have contributed to sustained performance in key areas such as emergency call handling and wider contact management.

8.4 The Constabulary continues to work closely with partner agencies to ensure that individuals receive the most appropriate response for their needs. Ongoing learning and development remain a focus to support effective and consistent application of RCRP. Work continues to refine data and ensure consistent application of RCRP principles across all relevant incidents.

9. DOMESTIC ABUSE VIDEO RESPONSE (DAVR)

9.1 The Constabulary implemented the Domestic Abuse Video Response (DAVR) Team in January 2024. The team consists of one Sergeant, four Police Constables, and seven staff Investigators. All domestic abuse incidents are subject to risk assessment to determine suitability for digital response, ensuring that safeguarding and victim needs remain the primary consideration.

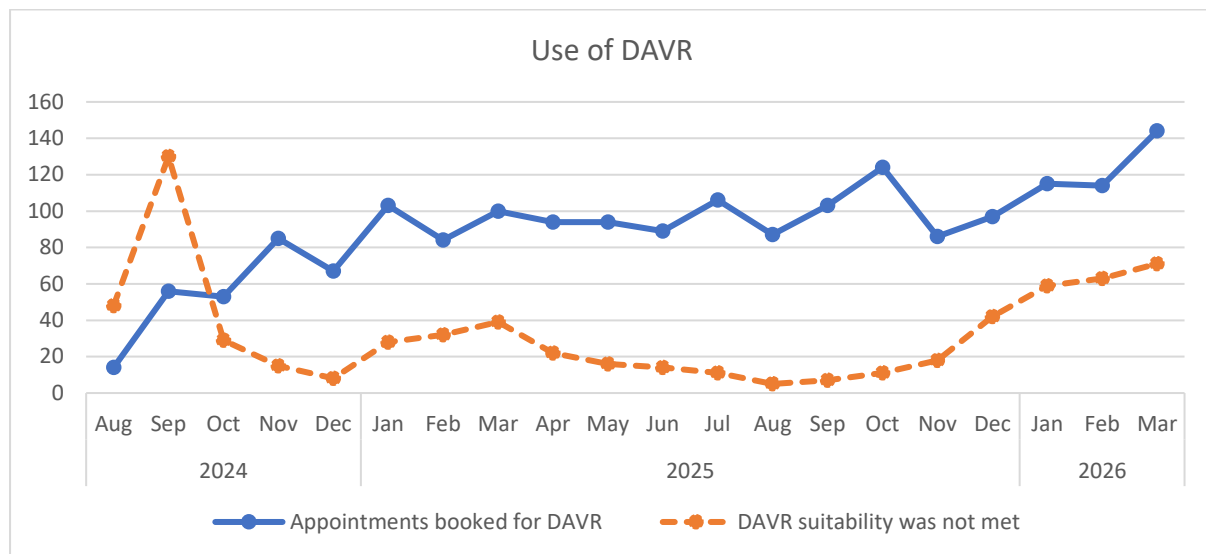
9.2 The DAVR model enables officers to engage with victims via video technology, offering both immediate "live" contact and scheduled appointment options where appropriate.

9.3 The use of DAVR continues to increase, with a growing proportion of domestic abuse incidents managed through this approach. This provides an additional channel for victim engagement, improving flexibility and enabling more timely initial contact in suitable cases.

9.4 Importantly, the model is applied based on victim needs and risk assessment, and the option of face-to-face attendance remains available where required or requested.

9.5 This approach supports a more flexible and victim-centred response, while helping to manage demand and improve overall service accessibility. As shown in Figure 10, the number of appointments facilitated through DAVR has increased over time, reflecting growing utilisation of the model.

Figure 10: Monthly Use of Domestic Abuse Video Response (DAVR) (August 2024 to March 2026)



10. ENGAGEMENT

- 10.1 The Constabulary continues to engage with national and regional innovation networks to support ongoing improvement in service delivery. This includes active involvement in the Eastern Regional Innovation Network, providing access to emerging practice, research, and peer learning.
- 10.2 This engagement supports the identification and adoption of improved approaches to contact management, digital delivery, and demand reduction, helping to ensure the Constabulary remains aligned with national best practice and continues to modernise its service.
- 10.3 The Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee states that communities and businesses should receive a response within 72 hours of submitting an enquiry regarding a community issue. Our system is set up so that any correspondence is sent to our Community Policing Teams via email, and if not actioned within 48 hours then it automatically alerts the CCR to ensure action.
- 10.4 To be able to track compliance with this standard, a new APP has been developed by the Home Office. This is being introduced in July 2026 and will be managed by the County Partnership and Prevention Hub.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 None.

12. OTHER IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

- 12.1 None.

13. CHIEF OFFICER CONCLUSION

- 13.1 Suffolk Constabulary continues to deliver a strong and resilient response to calls for assistance, maintaining high performance in emergency call handling while managing increasing and more complex demand across non-emergency and digital contact channels.

- 13.2 Emergency call performance remains consistently above national standards, with timely response to incidents across all call grading categories. However, non-emergency demand has increased during the reporting period, with a corresponding reduction in timeliness of response and a slight increase in call abandonment rates. These changes reflect both rising demand and increasing complexity, particularly in calls involving vulnerability and safeguarding considerations.
- 13.3 The expansion of digital services, including the Digital Contact and Engagement Team and Single Online Home, has improved accessibility and provided additional channels for public contact. While these services are increasingly utilised, overall demand across both telephony and digital channels continues to grow, reinforcing the need for a multi-channel approach to contact management.
- 13.4 Targeted initiatives such as Right Care Right Person (RCRP) and the Domestic Abuse Video Response (DAVR) model have supported improved allocation of demand, enabling police resources to focus on incidents requiring a policing response, while maintaining a victim-centred approach.
- 13.5 Overall, the Constabulary has maintained strong performance in key areas while adapting to changing demand. Continued focus on demand management, service accessibility, and the effective use of digital channels will be essential to sustaining performance and improving public experience.