

ORIGINATOR: CHIEF CONSTABLE

PAPER NO: AP15/79

**SUBMITTED TO: ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL -
15 DECEMBER 2015**

SUBJECT: 101 CALL HANDLING PERFORMANCE

SUMMARY:

1. This report provides an update on the 101 call handling by the Contact and Control Room (CCR), identifying key performance information and any significant operational or organisational issues.
2. There are no significant financial implications to note within this report.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. The Accountability and Performance Panel is asked to note the content of the report.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Contact and Control Room (CCR) handles on average 59,814 calls per year. This equates to 4985 emergency 999 calls and 9853 non-emergency 101 calls per month. (Data based on four year average).
- 1.2 The Police and Crime Plan measure to answer 90% of 999 emergency calls within 10 seconds has been consistently achieved by Suffolk CCR by prioritising the calls and using ring fenced staff to handle them. In comparison with similar Forces, Suffolk 999 emergency call handling performance is in the top two Forces.
- 1.3 Performance in respect of 101 non- emergency call handling has proved challenging during 2015. This paper provides analysis and the impact factors driving current performance and organisational options for improvement.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Whilst not a measure in the Police and Crime Plan, Suffolk Constabulary seek to answer 80% of 101 non-emergency calls within 20 seconds.
- 2.2 Performance relating to 101 call handling has been reported on as part of the Accountability and Performance reporting since 2014. This was in order to draw attention to a trend of increasing demand and a reduction in performance.
- 2.3 In November 2013, Storm was launched. In the drive to improve the quality of the interaction with the caller and the initial data and intelligence recorded, the time taken on calls increased by an average of 10%.
- 2.4 The increased data requirement afforded operators more time to fully analyse, assess and grade the information resulting in a more effective identification of threat, risk and harm.
- 2.5 During the Storm implementation and the subsequent debate between Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies over a merged CCR, recruitment of staff had been placed on hold. On 30th April 2014, a decision not to join the two CCR's together was made. During this period nine members of staff left the CCR. Feedback from exit interviews revealed that five departures were attributed to the proposed merger of the two CCR's, three of the nine staff were on temporary contracts and left voluntarily and one left for personal reasons.
- 2.6 The Accountability and Performance Panel received regular reports of 101 call handling performance, and the relevance of the 80% measure of calls answered within 20 seconds was discussed.
- 2.7 In 2014 THRIVE, an enhanced grading policy, which considers threat, harm, risk, investigative opportunities, the presence of vulnerability factors and engagement opportunities, was trialled. Whilst the existing grading policy relating to 999 and 101 calls determines the speed of the response, the THRIVE model seeks to identify the most appropriate means of servicing the individual needs and requirements relating to non-urgent demand.
- 2.8 By 31st December 2014, 101 calls answered within target had slipped to 65.8%. CCR were under establishment by 18 full time equivalent (FTE) posts. A recruitment process had taken place and new staff were deployed to both the call taking and dispatch function within the CCR.

- 2.9 The introduction of THRIVE was evaluated internally and had proved to be a huge success. The review identified that THRIVE was more effective in identifying threat, risk and harm, resources were utilised more efficiently and 18% of reported crime was handled by the THRIVE Desk. As a result, THRIVE was fully implemented in the CCR in March 2015.
- 2.10 A further recruitment process was undertaken to fill existing and predicted vacancies, with staff trained and scheduled to go live in two tranches - nine in April and nine in June 2015.
- 2.11 A review of flexible shifts and flexible work patterns was also completed in order to more effectively match resources to periods of high demand.
- 2.12 At this time the Constabulary website was being developed to allow members of the public to interact with police via that platform, particularly where advice is sought, to reduce 101 call demand. Furthermore, the Constabulary had begun a project aiming to implement a digital IP telephony system (IVRS), including automated telephony options. This project is expected to be implemented in October 2016.

3. CURRENT PERFORMANCE

- 3.1 101 call handling performance has noticeably decreased since January 2015. Based on a rolling twelve month average, in September 2015, performance stood at 60.7% of 101 calls answered within twenty seconds.
- 3.2 The main reasons for this are:
- The introduction of Thrive processes in March 2015.
 - Exceptionally high levels of demand in July 2015. The volume of 101 calls offered was the highest since records began in 2007.
 - A number of issues impacted on performance in September 2015, namely Athena training abstractions, sickness and annual leave.
 - Staff vacancies within the CCR (currently 23.73 FTE).

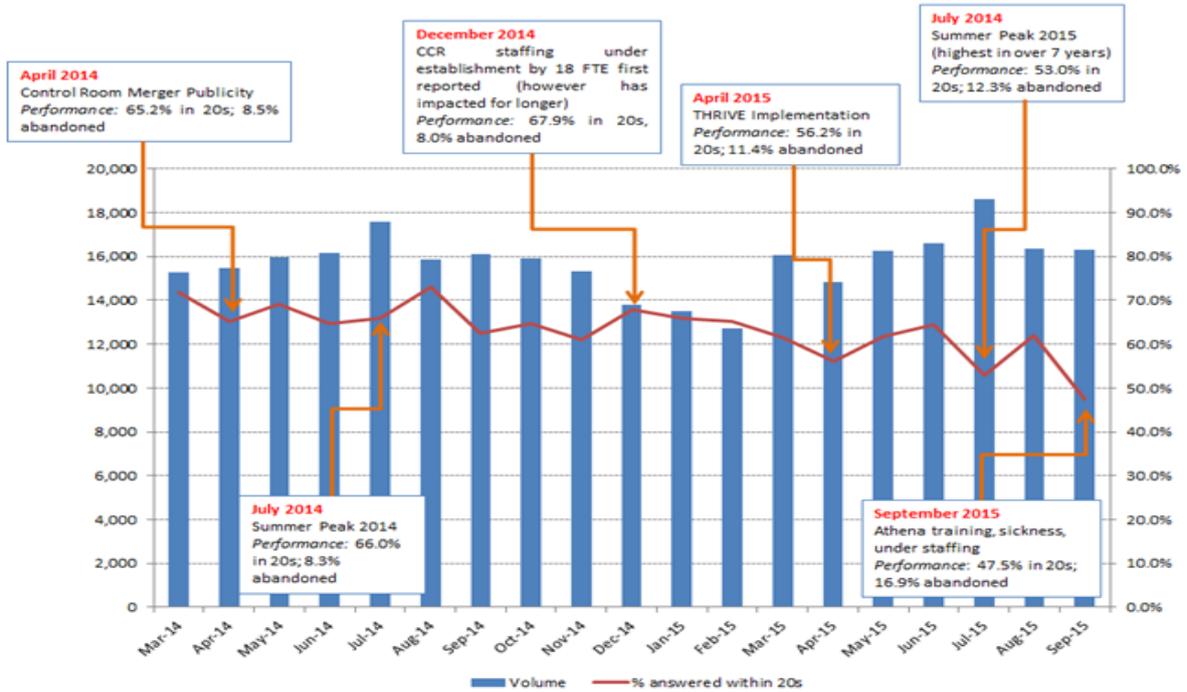


Figure 1

- 3.3 Figure 1 displays a summary of 101 call handling volumes and percentage of calls answered within the 20 second measure from March 2014 to September 2015, along with explanatory notes of the main issues affecting performance over that time.
- 3.4 Between March 2014 and September 2015, the monthly volume of calls has fluctuated between 12,726 and 18,593 call per month. The peak of 18,593 in July 2015 is the highest since recording began in 2007.
- 3.5 Approximately 90% of all 101 non-emergency calls offered each month are answered, with the average ring time remaining largely under one minute (figure 2 below)

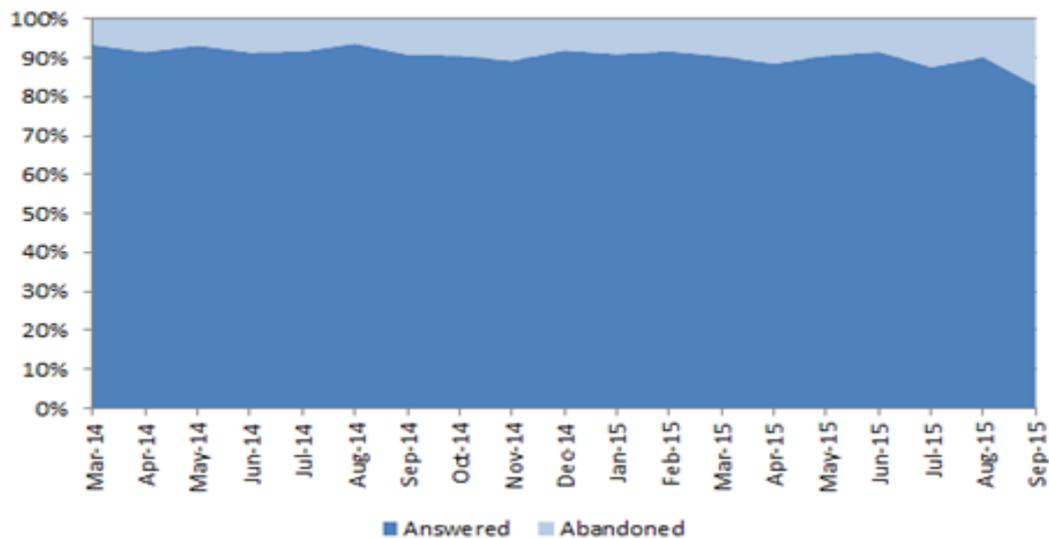


Figure 2: Proportions of Suffolk 101 calls answered vs abandoned

- 3.6 The measure to answer 80% of 101 calls in 20 seconds appears less relevant in the context of providing a better quality service, improved identification and assessment of threat, risk and harm issues and a more appropriate level of response to events called in via 101. A review of similar Forces non – emergency call handling performance measures has revealed that many either have no measure or target or a reduced or lower service target/measure.

Most Similar Police Forces	Non-emergency target
Devon and Cornwall	No target set
Norfolk	80% of calls within 30 seconds
North Wales	No target set
North Yorkshire	No target set
Warwickshire	No target Set
West Mercia	No target set
Wiltshire	No target set

- 3.7 A brief review of non-emergency call handling in the private sector has revealed that the performance is measured using the 80/20 rule, this is 80% within twenty seconds. However, this performance is taken from the time the call is made by the caller, to the first time the call is answered. The call will then be placed in a queue awaiting a call handler or passed to an automated self-service system. Suffolk 101 non-emergency calls are promptly answered by Central Call Answering (CCA). Calls are routed to specific departments and individuals or to the CCR. Performance is measured from the time CCA route the call to a call taker in the CCR. It can therefore be acknowledged that the private sector do not have the same service level as Suffolk Police. Emergency 999 calls bypass this system.
- 3.8 Acknowledging that 101 non-emergency calls are made by callers reporting non-urgent matters, or who seek information, a revised 101 non-emergency performance measure should be considered.

4. PERFORMANCE RECOVERY PLAN

- 4.1 There are a number of opportunities to improve performance in the medium to long term:
- A recruitment programme to fill CCR vacancies is scheduled for December 2015. Training for successful candidates is programmed for February 2016. Staff will start in the CCR in April 2016.
 - Progress technical opportunities – IP digital telephony with automated telephony options was implemented in October 2015. New website scheduled to go live at the end of 2016.
 - It is proposed that the Suffolk non-emergency call handling performance measure be amended to answering 90% of 101 calls within one minute. This would reinforce our commitment to prioritising 999 emergency call handling and focusing our 101 non-emergency call handling on providing a quality interaction with the caller, an improved assessment of threat, risk and harm and an appropriate response to the caller’s needs.
 - A further review of THRIVE is currently being undertaken by the Evidence Based Policing Review led by Professor Eddie Kane. This is scheduled to report in Autumn 2016.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no financial implications to note.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

6.1 There are no other implications and risks.

ORIGINATOR CHECKLIST (MUST BE COMPLETED)	PLEASE STATE 'YES' OR 'NO'
Has legal advice been sought on this submission?	No
Has the PCC's Chief Finance Officer been consulted?	No
Have equality, diversity and human rights implications been considered including equality analysis, as appropriate?	No
Have human resource implications been considered?	Yes – the Human Resources Department have been fully engaged regarding the recruitment programme.
Is the recommendation consistent with the objectives in the Police and Crime Plan?	Yes
Has consultation been undertaken with people or agencies likely to be affected by the recommendation?	No – there are no issues likely to impact on multi-agency governance arrangements.
Has communications advice been sought on areas of likely media interest and how they might be managed?	Yes – 101 call handling performance has been discussed with the Constabulary Corporate Communications Department.
Have all relevant ethical factors been taken into consideration in developing this submission?	Yes