

<b>CAMBRIDGESHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL</b>	<b>Agenda Item No. 9</b>
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## **Report of the Police and Crime Commissioner**

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### **101 CALL HANDLING**

#### **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Police and Crime Panel on developments in the 101 call handling function by Cambridgeshire Constabulary (“the Constabulary”).

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 To note the report.

#### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 As Police and Crime Commissioner my over-riding priority for the Constabulary is to keep people safe; in this the Chief Constable and myself are in complete agreement. In times of austerity, public safety cannot be compromised, and has not been, within Cambridgeshire. The reality is that to achieve this with reduced budgets and in anticipation of future reductions in budgets, we have had to focus our efforts on considerations of vulnerability through assessments of Threat, Risk and Harm. This approach applies to attendance at incidents and other deployments, prioritising resources in our Public Protection Department as well as to our call handling function.
- 3.2 Since November 2012 I have focused on call handling performance in response to public concerns and it is a priority within my Police and Crime Plan. It is important that the function is fully understood when considering performance.
- 3.3 Emergency 999 calls are our highest priority, for obvious reasons. These are received within our Force Control Room (FCR) where each is assessed swiftly and efficiently with the operator determining the most appropriate way to deal with it.
- 3.4 Non-Emergency 101 calls are received within our Police Service Centre (PSC). Despite this being the non-emergency number, some calls are received via 101 that are emergency calls, for instance when there is a crime in progress. It is, therefore, vital that once the call is initially answered, that an assessment takes place of the nature of the call, the vulnerability of the caller and the urgency of further action. This is most accurately described as initial triage.
- 3.5 Should there be a need for immediate action then the 101 call can be treated in the same way as a 999 call, with an incident created and the FCR will despatch a resource. Of the remaining non-urgent calls, approximately 50% are requests to be put through to departments or officers. The remaining 50% are transferred within the PSC to staff who can spend the time with the caller to take all the necessary details, provide support, advice and guidance, recording a crime or incident report as necessary, all of which can take a considerable time, hence is done after initial triage. The process of transferring the call within the PSC after triage is termed “secondary call handling”.

## 4. PERFORMANCE

### 999 Call handling

4.1 In terms of 999 data, this continues to represent excellent performance. We have sustained month on month performance of around 95% of calls answered within 10 seconds; this compares very favourably against other forces. The average wait time for answering is consistently around 4 or 5 seconds.

4.2

	Aug 2013	Sept 2013	Oct 2013	Nov 2013	Dec 2013	Jan 2014	Feb 2014
Call Vol	10050	8693	9641	8741	9129	7596	8256
% ans in 10 sec	95.66	95.83	96.68	97.65	96.99	98.00	96.30

	March 2014	Apr 2014	May 2014	June 2014	July 2014	Aug 2014	Sept 2014	Oct 2014 to date
Call Vol	8304	8203	9090	8980	10215	9308	8413	5560
% ans in 10 sec	96.10	96.30	96.05	96.01	93.44	93.41	93.78	94.30

4.3 To reiterate what has been highlighted above, this is the recognised emergency number for the public to contact the police on and our highest priority for the maintenance of performance.

### 101 First Pick Up

4.4 There has been sustained good performance in respect of the initial answering of non-emergency calls. As indicated above this allows for swift and effective triage to ascertain the vulnerability of the caller and the urgency of any police response required. The table below demonstrates that around 95% of calls are answered in less than 30 seconds.

4.5

	Sept 2013	Oct 2013	Nov 2013	Dec 2013	Jan 2014	Feb 2014	Mar 2014
Call Vol	28227	29411	27889	26439	27297	26085	29369
% ans in 30 sec	95.56	96.39	97.16	95.74	95.46	95.18	94.44

	Apr 2014	May 2014	June 2014	July 2014	Aug 2014	Sept 2014	Oct 2014 to date
Call Vol	27003	29753	31336	33400	29303	30331	17970
% ans in 30 sec	94.55	94.25	91.35	92.50	94.82	93.71	94.38

## 101 Secondary Pick Up – Post triage

4.6 After the initial triage assessment of the call, where appropriate the call is transferred within the PSC for the creation of an incident or recording of a crime. This aspect of call handling has caused me concern for some considerable time and has been the subject of many discussions with the Chief Constable. We are both in agreement that the current standard of service is not acceptable and that there needs to be considerable improvement.

4.7

	Mar 2014	Apr 2014	May 2014	June 2014	July 2014	Aug 2014	Sept 2014	Oct 2014 to date
<b>% Abandoned after 30 secs</b>	13.35	13.42	16.74	19.79	21.27	16.68	16.47	13.49
<b>Average Wait Time (minutes &amp; seconds)</b>	1.42	2.19	3.47	4.34	5.1	3.31	3.25	3.16
<b>Longest Wait Time (minutes &amp; seconds)</b>	16.43	40.46	54.54	52.12	54.29	39.27	59.18	56.42

4.8 Secondary call handling performance deteriorated from March 2014 to June/July 2014 when the average wait times peaked and have reduced from these peak levels in the months since then as a result of additional measures put in place, albeit further work is on-going to improve this still further.

4.9 A number of factors have contributed to performance of secondary call handling. Firstly, the PSC has experienced above average absence, e.g. maternity leave and sickness. Whilst new staff have been recruited and trained this has been a lengthy process and once appointed there is a considerable lag before they are fully competent due to the range and complexity of issues received in the PSC.

4.10 In addition, analysis has shown that the average length of calls has increased. This is primarily as a result of a change in some working practices in relation to calls involving vulnerability. This would include matters relating to public protection including vulnerable children and adults. This increase in time is necessary to ensure that a comprehensive assessment takes place from the outset thereby ensuring continued safeguarding of those involved and all investigation considerations are thoroughly assessed.

4.11 A number of actions have been taken to address these performance issues, which are described below.

4.12 A survey is on my website asking for feedback on the 101 service. To date there have been 46 submissions. We have also received a number of pieces of correspondence on the 101 service. Although there are a number of respondents who are satisfied with the service, the people who completed the survey tended to have had a poor experience. The main complaint was the length of time it took to answer the call with people giving up after a period of time. Some people gave up after 5 minutes, others after 30 minutes. Some callers felt their call was not understood by the call taker and was therefore not directed properly. Several callers said they favoured being able to book a time slot to discuss their issue for calls that were not time sensitive. Respondents would be happy to communicate by text or e-mail rather than phone.

4.13 Demand analysis to determine whether peaks in demand are matched with staff availability. This has been concluded and there is a close match between demand and staff working in the PSC. In order to further improve the management of peak levels of demand there has been an investment in the telephony software to allow 101 calls also to be routed through to the FCR and Major Operations Room as well as the PSC. This has allowed existing staff within those

functions to be used to respond to 101 calls at times of peak and often unpredicted demand. This has been in place since late July 2014 and has already seen an improvement in service and reduction in waiting times.

- 4.14 Further discussions have taken place with the providers of the software used in monitoring call handling performance to ascertain if more detailed analysis is possible to identify other solutions.
- 4.15 Consideration has been given to a call-back facility to avoid callers in non-emergency situations waiting for undue lengths of time for secondary pick-up.
- 4.16 The Constabulary have prepared a new business case looking at additional options addressing specifically concerns with 101 secondary pick up that I will be discussing with the Chief Constable in the near future to consider the most appropriate short term next steps.
- 4.17 In considering the Constabulary 101 business case and determining what the immediate next steps should be there are a number of longer term considerations such as collaboration, Programme Metis and the resourcing impact, which are described below.
- 4.18 Collaboration – a business case for a collaboration on “Public Contact Management” between the Constabulary, Bedfordshire Police and Hertfordshire Constabulary is being prepared which incorporates call handling functions and needs considering alongside the specific one prepared by the Constabulary for 101 call handling.
- 4.19 Programme Metis and Self-serve plans to open up access for the public to reporting crime directly on line, contacting officers and staff directly amongst other things.
- 4.20 Short term investment of resources in 101 call handling will mean less resources elsewhere. In careful planning with the Chief Constable, I have protected the frontline and will continue to do so. The full impact of taking resources from elsewhere to invest in call handling needs extremely careful consideration, given that potential investment is to improve post-triage or secondary call handling.

## **5. IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Emergency 999 call handling and initial 101 triage pick-up has remained good and it is critical that it remains so. Secondary pick-up is not satisfactory and needs improvement. Collaboration and increased use of Information Technology, to open up the option of self-serve, will provide solutions in the long term. We continue to look at whether, against the back drop of austerity, additional shorter term improvements can be made which do not cut across these long term solutions.

## **6. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

- 6.1 Business Coordination Papers – 8<sup>th</sup> May 2014, 28<sup>th</sup> August 2014 and 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2014 <http://www.cambridgeshire-pcc.gov.uk/work/>

Police and Crime Panel Report June 2014

<http://democracy.peterborough.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=543&MId=3391&Ver=4>

101 call handling survey <http://cambridgeshire-pcc.gov.uk/survey/101-call-handling/>.

Police and Crime Plan 2013 – 2016 <http://www.cambridgeshire-pcc.gov.uk/police-crime-plan/>