

AGENDA ITEM 6a

Essex Police and Crime Panel	EPCP/05/17
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Report title: Essex Police and Public Contact

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Purpose of Report

Priority 1 of the new Police and Crime Plan 2016-20 is 'Local, visible and accessible policing.'

This paper presents the work by Essex Police in relation to public contact, including work to improve the non-emergency telephone contact (101).

The paper is split into three sections as follows:

Section One

Current progress and improvement plans for non-emergency contact from the Essex Police Contact Management Command.

Section Two

Update of the Essex Police Public Contact Programme

Section Three

Update and plans of the Essex/Kent collaboration for public contact and force control rooms

A separate paper has been prepared to provide an update on public engagement and the Community Partnership Team meetings. The paper describes how local policing teams are engaging with local communities.

Recommendation

That Police and Crime Panel members note the report.

1.0 Essex Police Contact Management Command

Contact Management Command comprises the Force Control Room (FCR), the Crime Bureau, Police National Computer (PNC) Bureau and Security Systems.

The function of the FCR is to manage the command and control of grade 1, 2 and 3 incidents. Once there ceases to be a requirement for command and control, incidents are passed to the Local Policing Area (LPA) or the Local Demand Response Management (LDRM), that are now part of the Contact Management Command.

The Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for the FCR are:

- 999 calls are to be answered within 10 seconds.
- All grade 1 (urban) and grade 2 (rural) incidents are to be allocated within 3 minutes of the call card being saved. The nationally mandated target for the attendance of grade 1 incidents is 15 minutes and the target for grade 2 incidents is 20 minutes.

There are no formal call handling targets (internal or otherwise) for non-emergency (101) calls.

A 101 call costs 15p no matter how long the call takes.

Current Call Handling Statistics

Switchboard:

The Essex Police switchboard is the first point of contact for all 101 calls into Essex Police. This team perform a triage function, and using the THRiVE model, will ensure the call is directed appropriately. This could be to report an incident (through to the FCR), report a crime (to the Crime Bureau) or elsewhere in the organisation. Hours of business for the switchboard are from 06:00 until 02:00, and outside of these hours calls are diverted to the FCR.

Year to Date (YTD), this team answers calls with an average wait time of 10 seconds, and Month To Date (MTD) **the team is answering in an average of just 5 seconds.**

This means that every member of the public who has called 101 this month, has spoken to a police employee within 5 seconds who has then put them through to the correct department following the conversation with the member of the public. This is called primary call handling.

FCR 101 Call Handling (Calls transferred from the Switchboard to a FCR Officer)

Year to Date (YTD), 101 call handling within the FCR (calls transferred from the switchboard when an incident is required to be created) is at 3 minutes 20

seconds. This means that from the primary call handling (switchboard) a caller will wait on average 3 minutes 20 seconds before speaking to another police employee who will take all their details and deal with their query, for instance sending an officer to speak to them. The calls passed to the FCR 101 call takers, tend to be higher level priority crimes and incidents, for example ASB or dwelling burglary.

Month to Date (MTD), **101 call handling has an average wait time of 1 minute and 29 seconds.**

Crime Bureau 101 Call Handling (Calls transferred from the Switchboard to a Crime Bureau Officer)

YTD, 101 call handling within the Crime Bureau (and considering call length will be much longer owing to the level of detail required) has an average wait time of 7 minutes and 52 seconds; **this is an improving picture and MTD is 4 minutes 17 seconds.**

There will be some longer wait times based on demand, time of day, staff availability and other factors, some of which are unpredictable as policing so often is.

The call handling average and longest wait times are showing improvements in service over the last three/four months. To help contextualise this, details of changes implemented or planned are shown below and on later pages.

It is worth noting that 101 calls are lower level crime reports, for instance, minor criminal damage, or damage to vehicles. Every crime has a victim and some 'lower level' matters can still be very troubling for the victim or cause inconvenience or financial implications and staff are mindful of these facts. Vulnerability will be explored on every call to ensure (if needed) victims are safeguarded and protected.

The member of the public will then speak to a Crime Bureau Investigator who will take all their (and the incident/crime) details from them. Sometimes this results in a Crime Bureau Investigator being on the phone for over 30 minutes as well as the undertaking of an investigation and safeguarding if necessary.

It should be emphasised that these calls have already been answered and a triage system applied at the first point of contact with the switchboard and then routed onwards.

A number of pieces of ongoing work will help to improve this picture. These include:

- A channel shift diverting calls (non-emergency 101 calls) to report via the Essex Police website 'Do It Online' facility. Works are now in progress to

process reports of ASB reported online through this facility as well and crime reports. Since the introduction of 'Do It Online' there has been a monthly increase in how much use there has been of this facility. From March 2016 to the end of November, there were 6862 reports created; however a number of these do not translate into actual crime reports, and there were 4750 RTC (Road Traffic Collisions) reported by this method.

- Amendments to the Integrated Voice Recognition (IVR) system when a caller dials 101 to ensure calls are routed to the most appropriate destination. This facility now offers the caller an option to speak directly to the Quality of Service Team. The Crime Bureau IVR reminds callers of the option of reporting matters online and where the caller sits in that particular call wait queue.
- Considering 101 (and all call) handling can rely heavily on staff availability. Essex Police have an ongoing and intensive recruitment campaign to fill vacancies within the FCR and Crime Bureau.
- Linked to this and to ensure staff are as skilled as possible, there is an intensive training programme for Contact Management Command for 2017, with seconded staff through the Develop You programme.
- Local Demand Response Management is now managed through the Contact Management Command. These teams, geographically based on Local Policing Areas, are responsible for incident management that is not managed by the FCR. Since their inauguration and through a number of local policing operations, these teams have assisted with STORM based incident demand reduction, thus freeing up local staff for other matters and ensuring better call handling within Contact Management.
- Since December 2016, the FCR has had a Twitter account, which has an increasing number of followers and this highlights the work of the command but also continues to publicise the message about a channel shift requesting non-emergency matters, if appropriate, to be considered for reporting online.

Over the last three/four months, there has been a steady improvement in 101 call handling within Contact Management Command and, as detailed above, a number of current or planned changes to business practices, to further improve the service the Command can provide to the public.

2.0 Essex Police Public Contact Programme (PCP)

The Public Contact Programme was set up in in January 2015 to design and implement a new operating model for public contact to provide members of the public, victims and witnesses with the same level of end-to-end service they experience from industry leaders in customer service however, whenever and whatever they contacted us about.

In July 2015, after initial scoping, a decision was taken by Chief Officers to separate out the Public Contact Programme into two phases. Phase one being delivered before April 2016 and phase two starting after April 2016.

Phase 1 (September 2015 – April 2016)

Phase 1 prioritised the delivery of some quick customer facing improvements:

- Procurement of a new website platform and content management system (CMS)
- Public Portal (initially online crime recording and improved signposting to partner agencies)
- Public Contact Points
- A reduction in front counter services
- Development and scoping options for the single user overview

Phase Two – Essex Related (from April 2016)

Phase two of the Public Contact Programme commenced after April 2016. Whilst collaborative opportunities were explored in more detail by the Essex/Kent Collaboration team, there still remained important Essex related work which needed to be progressed. This work included the activities summarised below and remained under the remit of the programme lead for Public Contact:

- Development of a more rich website with public facing information and interactivity, through the opportunities created by the new CMS and website functionality
- Maximising the opportunities created for self-serve and online channel shift from the new website and digital online facilities, including business to business as well as public to police interactivity
- Implementation of online crime recording, road traffic collisions and lost/found property
- Online complaints forms and low level concerns
- Development of the Force Channel Shift Strategy in line with the Demand Reduction Strategy
- Evaluation of the Contact Point pilot and a proposal for the potential roll out of more devices, including an application for funding from the Home Office Police Fund Innovation Bid
- Evaluation of the Single User Overview business case and opportunities for extending across partners
- Closer working with councils to evaluate the provision of more front counter services from council locations and by partner staff (e.g. Maldon, Brentwood and Saffron Walden)
- Internal cultural, leadership and transformational change to promote and deliver quality of service that promotes confidence in policing
- Public engagement, awareness and partnership engagement

Further work included:

- Victim and witness user satisfaction (and development of domestic abuse surveys)
- The central Quality of Service Team and Quality of Service and Standards Group
- Professional lead for the front counter services
- The force Confidence Programme of Work (now Victim Focus and Public Confidence Board)
- The Victims' Code of Practice and gap analysis
- The low level concerns pilot and single point of contact
- The force staff and well-being survey

Planned work: Website Phase Development Phase 2

This phase will include more on-line reporting products such as ASB reporting, driving complaints and information for the Professional Standards Department.

Live Chat

The Quality of Service Team will be piloting the use of Live Chat¹ to open another channel specifically for the public to contact the force about low level concerns and dissatisfaction. The pilot is due to start in March 2017 and will help determine the level of demand and public use of Live Chat as well as the benefits to the force.

The pilot aims to offer instant communication via Live Chat software through the Essex Police website with members of the public who wish to express a concern with their perceived level of service.

Payments Project

An online payments project has been created to prioritise opportunities for online payments in co-operation with business units for other online requested products, including firearms applications, data protection freedom of information requests and accident reports.

Contact Point Proof of Concept (POC)

¹ Live Chat enables an online visitor to contact a Live Chat operator and attempt to have their query resolved through a text based communication method often referred to as 'instant messaging'.

Public Contact Points were trialled at Grays and Rayleigh police stations from early April, ending on 31st October 2016. A similar trial running at two public libraries, Brentwood and Harwich, has been extended until 31st January 2017.

A video conference style capability was also available on the self-service device, potentially linking a station visitor to a call handling agent at a remotely located contact centre. This was **not** used during the trial.

Following the trial, two documents are being prepared which will provide a summary of the findings and the proposal on the next stage.

Athena Engagement Tool

The Athena online reporting tool development will allow the public to report a non-emergency incident, check the progress of their report online and send more information to us.

Improved Service and Accessibility for Members of the Public with Concerns about Service

Since December 2016, members of the public using the 101 telephone service to contact Essex Police have been able to select an option on the IVR system to speak directly with a member of the Quality of Service Team. This is in respect of matters previously reported where they may wish to raise a concern or dissatisfaction regarding their perceived level of service.

3.0 Essex/Kent Collaboration for Public Contact and Force Control Rooms

The joint Kent and Essex Contact Management Command Review (CMCR) was convened in mid-2016 to consider the feasibility and benefits of a collaborated function between the two forces. It was also tasked to explore options with wider blue light partners in regard to opportunities for closer working that would provide mutual benefits.

Current trends in performance within Essex Police, and more widely across the public sector, continue to predict that volume and complexity of demand continues to rise. This continues to cause significant pressure on public contact processes, in particular call length, together with the level of resources required to deal with the volume of demand to maintain and improve quality going forward. Commentary from the wider industry suggests that digital channels (in particular web chat) will eclipse telephone as the preferred method of contact by 2018. It is also generally accepted that seeking to resolve as much demand as possible at first contact is an efficient and effective method of dealing with demand and providing good customer service. It is however important that during the design and modelling stages for early resolution, that the overall impact on demand

(including failure demand) is carefully monitored as call/contact lengths may well increase.

A key objective of the CMCR is to improve the 101 service provided to the public of Essex. Whilst it is likely that call volumes will level off or even drop in the near future, they will continue to be a key contact method for the public. Improving 101 will be achieved through a number of strands of work either led or supported by the review team with the Senior Leadership Team and the new Head of Public Engagement and Customer Service.

As part of the transformational change approach, the project is currently carrying out detailed analysis of the contact and response processes which include 101 and 999 from a technical perspective, performance and quality and how they actually work in practice. Alongside this, the project will commission a deeper analysis of demand to understand why the public (and other partners) use the 101 service and how it meets their needs. Building on the work carried out by the Public Contact Programme, it is clear there is an excessively wide range of demand coming into Essex on the 101 system, where a significant proportion does not require an expensive call handler or switchboard operator response, and legitimately where an alternative response via a digital channel can be provided at a far reduced cost.

The emerging design principles that will be used to define the new structure and approach for Contact Management will major on areas such as:

- Mitigation of threat, harm and risk
- Delivering measurable benefits for the public
- Complementing the Police and Crime Plan and force priorities
- Developing relationships with the public and having wide access to information that helps us identify and protect the most vulnerable
- Resolving as much demand as possible at first contact
- Providing a range of digital services that meets public need
- Developing, valuing and professionalising our contact management staff
- Delivering a better service at a lower cost base

The CMCR remains confident that it is possible, through transforming the business and collaborating with key partners, to achieve an end state which delivers a better service at a lower cost. Managing significant change in this business critical area presents a number of risks; however adopting an inclusive approach with senior leaders and operational teams will ensure that staff have the ability to influence and shape change in a positive way and thus feel part of the future model.