

COMMUNITY OUTCOMES MEETING

MAKING SURE CRIMINAL JUSTICE WORKS FOR COMMUNITIES

27 June 2017

SUBJECT: CUSTOMER CONTACT CENTRE CALL HANDLING REPORT

Report of the Chief Constable

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. This report outlines the Force's current position in relation to the Police Customer Contact Centre.

RECOMMENDATION

2. That the Police and Crime Commissioner uses this report to scrutinise Force activity in respect of call handling.

POLICE AND CRIME PLAN

3. The PCC regularly receives feedback on call handling both in informal and formal meetings and from members of the public and the press. The performance of the call centre impacts directly on victims and witnesses and is vital to ensure that victims get the high quality support and help they need, when they need it, in the way they need it from the right agency, call centre performance also has a direct positive or potentially negative impact on trust and confidence in policing.

KEY INFORMATION

4. The PCC has visited the call centre on a number of occasions to talk to the call centre manager and the staff who work there. Performance around the 101 continues to be a topic raised with the PCC both at partner and community meetings and is also routinely raised through casework.
5. The impact of 101 performance continues to be discussed in a delivery setting when looking at Force performance as part of the quarterly performance framework. The PCCs Youth Advisory Group and West Yorkshire Police Force Independent Advisory Group has also visited the call centre to observe how 999 calls and 101 calls are answered.
6. The PCC also launched a joint contact survey with West Yorkshire Police (December 2016), the survey was launched to learn more about how and why people contact the police, whether they have visited their local police station or other public enquiry counters recently and to establish whether they are aware of the new ways of contacting the police which are available. The results of the survey will enable the PCC and the Chief Constable to better understand the needs of communities. The survey closed on 19 January 2017 with 2,783 responses, the findings have been considered and a series of recommendations have been made and responded to. (February 2017).

Of note, the survey did highlight that the most commonly known form of contact for the police was 999 with 97.9% of respondents stating that they were aware of this although this awareness dropped to 90% for respondents from a BME background and that the most common way for respondents to contact West Yorkshire Police in the last year was by phoning 101 with 43% of the respondents stating that they used this method.

7. The PCC has also used engagement opportunities to promote the benefits of online reporting #ClickB4UCall Campaign which highlights to the public the different ways in which members of the public can now contact West Yorkshire Police, he has also used the opportunity to discuss levels of high demand taking the opportunity where possible to talk to individuals and groups about their experiences, he also provided a link on his own website to online reporting.



Chief Officer Team Briefing for PCC

Title: Customer Contact Centre Call Handling report – update May 2017

CoT Sponsor: ACC Battle

Report Author: Tom Donohoe – CCC Head

Summary

1. This report is an update of one submitted to Chief Officer Team and the Police and Crime Commissioner in January 2017. It is intended as supplementary to the original report.
2. As outlined in the January document, and despite increased demand, the 999 service continues to improve and in fact for the month of April 2017 CCC did not abandon a single 999 call with an average 999 call queue time of less than 5 seconds.
3. This has never been achieved within WYP previously and I am unaware of any Force Nationally achieving this. To this end other Forces such as GMP have visited us to determine how we are managing our critical service under increased demand.
4. 9s demand has increased around 9% on last year. Single None Emergency Number (SNEN) by around 3-4% (although in recent weeks this uplift in demand has decreased) and online transactions are up 17%
5. We continue to perform very strongly in the area of delays to 999 calls being answered, a position closely monitored by the NPCC.
6. We have also had significant periods of improvement on 101, however, this has been inconsistent despite having the best 101 performance we have ever seen at points during this year we have also had some very difficult weeks.
7. Part of this issue stems from a lack of experienced staff in the room and having to utilise experienced staff to monitor/train and coach them.
8. By the end of May 2017 we will have 112 staff with just over, or less than, 12 months service, (with 41 still in training) over 50% of our staffing compliment.
9. Our innovative training Hub means that we can minimise impact on the department by a better “experienced staff to new staff” ratio, the demands are still significant - but are being met.

10. We continue to utilise CCC staff in the recruiting/development and coaching of new staff which is a benefit to the unit and individuals concerned
11. The recent changes to staff terms and conditions mean that new staff to CCC will have to stay with us for a minimum of 9 months before being able to apply for posts within the Organisation (and actually potentially longer taking into account the application process) and this will assist.
12. Forces nationally continue to report increases in demand as we have seen and as a unit we are busy tackling the two areas that affect us most: staffing levels alongside experience and increased demand. To this end we have courses running in June, July, August and October of this year. These will not only allow CCC to increase and maintain staffing number above compliment, but also to release staff to other units within the Force who rely on the excellent pool of staff we have within CCC. There is obviously a lead in time for new staff to "bed in" to the role, but we have dramatically reduced this time without sacrificing quality. For example, Regional Scientific Support would not have gone live without our assistance in providing staff and also course places to accommodate their go live date. The Force Crime Management Unit and District Control Rooms have also benefited from our skilled staff being successful in applications this year, as have other units, but this has had an impact on the CCC.
13. To cope with the lack of experience we are utilising bespoke training plans, as well as pushing to get maximum benefit from our knowledge portal, Sergei, (acknowledged by HMIC and College of Policing as best practice) with a video vault section to assist new staff in explaining "why we do what we do"
14. CCC also have a number of staff, which include three Police volunteers, assisting with the large scale audits that we have to complete due to the number of staff new to the role. Plus the role of call handler is becoming more complex, with the number of calls relating to mental health issues and missing persons for example making audits even more important than ever.
15. CCC staff still tend to move onto roles within the Organisation and often see CCC as a stepping stone in their career. So, to fully understand our attrition, we monitor exit interviews closely (and complete these for all staff leaving CCC). These are largely positive. The Probationer Constable of the year for example started his working life in WYP with CCC. They stated that they had learned a lot, developed their skills and been offered "multiple" opportunities to develop and enjoyed his time with CCC working with a "great team". They commented "as much as the job is one big team, everyone's individual efforts do not go unnoticed". This is the ethos within the unit that we are aiming for.

WYP 999 Performance

16. Our current average queue time for a 999 call is less than 5 seconds, and we have achieved 3 seconds queue time in recent weeks. This is consistent, solid performance.
17. Our abandoned rate for April was 0%.
18. We achieve 95% of 999 calls answered in 10 seconds against an aspiration of 90% in 10 seconds.

19. Our current customer satisfaction for 999 calls is 97.2% for ease of contact and 94.4 % for ability of call handler. (please see Appendix A)
20. We have an effective and proven method for dealing with “silent” or “dropped” 999 calls which means that the risk reflected in the media recently regarding silent calls is mitigated.
21. We have been identified by a recent HMIC inspection as being “best in country” at recognising vulnerability at initial point of contact and for having processes for dealing with terrorist attack, “firmly embedded” within the room.
22. As well as receiving an “outstanding” rating from the HMIC for call handling last year, recent reviews with HMIC have been positive along with review by Ernst and Young giving further positive comments regarding what we achieve under difficult circumstances.
23. We compare more than favourably with other Forces in terms of queue times, especially around 999 queue length. Other Forces are looking to us in developing their best practice.

WYP 101 Performance:

24. Budgetary pressure in 2014 led to challenges in staffing which have now been resolved. That, coupled with a strategy that involved protecting the critical 999 service, continues to impact on the Forces 101 service.
25. We have also seen an increase in non – Police calls of between 15%-20% often due to partners facing the same challenges that we do.
26. Our average queue time for 101 has been improving, with periods over the last 2 months where this has been as low as 13 seconds but we still face inconsistencies.
27. Our current customer satisfaction for 101 calls is 93.2% for ease of contact and 95% for ability of call handler, (appendix A) but we appreciate that ringing at peak times can be frustrating and we are working on educating callers as to the best time to ring to get through easily.
28. We are utilising attendance at Neighbourhood Watch Meetings, Council Meetings, IAGs, and Tenant Associations to get this message across as well as hosting community meetings, and visits within the unit to the same end and are utilising publicity to get the message across in terms of how callers can help us to help them (please see Appendix B)
29. All of the visits to the unit have been successful with visitors to the unit leaving as advocates and with a greater understanding of the challenges we face and what we are doing to meet them.
30. CCC staff try to resolve as many calls as possible on initial contact, currently about 60-65% of contact to the unit is dealt with at that point. This means we free up valuable Officer resource and also offer a better service to callers, we have maintained this despite the large number of new, inexperienced, staff.
31. We still lead the way in terms of non-emergency contact options, web chat (first Force in the country to provide this popular service) online crime, lost property, ASB, Hate Crime, book a call back, contact an Officer and track my crime, as well as plans to develop these options

further. The Force Crime Management unit are looking to improve on the foundations we have in place in terms of on-line crime recording.

32. We also have a hugely successful “self-service” option, “clickB4ucall” accessible from the ‘Contact Us’ page of the Force website and offering information on not only Police matters, but also links to Council websites.
33. We are utilising social media to publicise alternative contact options as well as highlighting road traffic issues, or peaks in demand in a bid to control demand more effectively, manage avoidable demand and keep the public informed. Our “Police aware” message on the 101 system is a tool we use to advise well intentioned callers that we may already be aware of an issue that they are ringing to let us know about (for example a blocked road) and have made use of the hashtags “#helpustohelpyou” and “#not999” extensively. We have had many positive comments and supportive tweets regarding our call handlers and the challenges that we face.
34. We are recognised nationally by other Forces as a lead Force in this area with a large number of Forces benchmark visiting us to copy what we are doing. In the last 12 months we have been visited by over a dozen Forces and the College of Policing as recently as Jan 2017 as we attract attention on our on-line and call management processes.

IT

35. We have increased the specification of the main computers in our Contact Centre with faster processors to allow us to handle calls and data more effectively. We have also upgraded our emergency power supply which caused us issues in the summer and in November 2016. The IT within the unit has improved significantly with a dedicated IT business manager in place. Upgrades to our telephony are also planned and in a trial test for installation after the summer.
36. The Force Demand Management Review team are working with CCC and IT on enhancements to systems. This will involve better use of technology including a Customer Records Management system (CRM) which is essential to our work, as well as a workforce management system which will help us to more effectively manage resources more quickly.
37. We work closer than ever with IT to ensure that systems within the Contact Centre are closely monitored for deviations from normal service and so faults can be corrected more quickly. At the same time our working relationship with BT, a key partner, has never been closer.

Resourcing

38. The demands of call handling coupled with the training staff receive means that when applying for other front facing roles the CCC staff have an advantage. Our staff initially trained at CCC have previously moved into new roles including Police Officer, PCSO, Detention Officer, Force Crime Management Unit, Regional Scientific Support, HMET, Safeguarding, IT, Training, Dispatch and Force Command. These staff often come with a career plan and the CCC has been a doorway to the Force for many staff. The aforementioned change to terms and conditions meaning that new staff have to stay with us for the period of their probation at least, helps massively with this issue. The support from the Chief Officer Team in terms of “phased releases” of CCC staff to other roles is also appreciated.

- 39 However, the acknowledged benefit to the Organisation from the recruiting/training we undertake as staff move on to other key roles within the Force and are at least part trained for their new role with a good understanding of how the Force works is significant.
- 40 We are continuing with our recruitment campaigns at pace, including focusing recruitment on staff able to work during peak demand hours, as well as conducting interview processes for ex- Dispatch staff to fill vacancies at District and so alleviating the pressures on CCC to backfill.. We have also worked with existing staff within CCC to align their hours to peak demand in a more effective way.
- 41 There is attention on potential summer volumes and a solid plan to ensure the CCC will be staffed effectively.
- 42 Additionally, we have utilised modular training to get new staff up and running more quickly, so alleviating pressure on the CCC and assisting IT training with scheduling due to the current demands on their services and facilities. The training for these staff is comprehensive and intense, involving basic law, customer service skills, the use of a number of IT systems that the call handler has to be able to move between during their role, as well as a grounding in Force policy and procedures. Plus the training around complex areas which includes cybercrime, Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Hate Crime for example.
- 43 We continue utilising our training Hub which allows new staff to complete calls in a safe environment, but with a reduced ratio of experienced staff to new recruits which eases pressure on the CCC and has been acknowledged as best practice within Police Forces and outside industry.
- 44 Finally, in an area that has traditionally seen high sickness rates, we currently have a less than 3% sickness rate and this has been as low as 2.5% during the 12 months.

REPORT DETAILS

ONGOING WORK AND DEVELOPMENTS

- As above, recruitment remains a focus, as does training and auditing, plus the IT developments and potential mentioned in the body of this report.
- Working with partners such as WMDC on managing shared demand better and better sharing of information
- Working with a number of Forces on the above.
- Working with North Yorkshire as part of a 2 Force group redesigning the National call Handling Standards document which is used by all Forces.
- Looking to improve our on-line facilities
- Working on a “keep safe” based pilot to assist vulnerable members of the community
- Working with Community groups (for example a PCC funded video on helping young people to contact the Police)
- Working with Central Resourcing on a modern apprenticeships proposal

STRATEGIC RISK IMPLICATIONS

These are included on the Force strategic risk register and have moved from red to amber due to the processes/plans already in place.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

As covered within the recruiting elements of the current processes as well as a consideration in terms of changes to contact options (we worked with disability groups on the on-line options). We also work closely with Simon Philips the Force Community engagement Officer.