



Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Panel

25th September 2020

Background information on the 101 service to inform the Police and Crime Panel Deep Dive

This report provides the Police and Crime Panel with information regarding the delivery and performance of the 101 service and the investments that the Commissioner has made to inform their understanding of the current position and direction of travel.

1. Introduction:

1.1 The Panel have requested information to support their deep dive into the 101 service. The following report provides a detailed picture of contact management services, investment in the service and performance over the last four years.

1.2 The report sets out:

- The Contact and Resolution Command services for 999 and 101
- Demand for the 101 and 999 services since 2016
- Investment in 101 services since 2016
- Current performance
- Recent developments and planned future changes

1.3 The delivery of services for the national non-emergency 101, 999 and online contact options such as webchat, email and online crime reporting are interdependent and are all delivered within Devon and Cornwall Police's Contact and Resolution Command (CRC). This report aims to simplify some of the complexities of this working environment.

2. The Contact and Resolution Command: 999 and 101 services

2.1 The Contact and Resolution Command was established in 2019 following a reorganisation of services within Devon and Cornwall Police. This restructure moved the control room services of 999 and 101 call handling out of the broader Alliance Operations Department and placed them with the new Incident and Resolution Centre under the command of a new Assistant Chief Constable and Chief Superintendent for Devon and Cornwall Police.

2.2 There were over a million contacts made to Devon and Cornwall Police in the year to 31st July 2020 which include:



- 999 emergency responses – 261,483 calls.
- 101 call handling – just over 581,000 calls received.
- 101 email and texts (including online crime reporting) – 131,470.
- Webchat – 28,173 received.
- Public Enquiry Offices (front desks) – eight desks currently open to the public

2.3 These services, including the non-emergency contact methods, operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

2.4 Staffing levels are 191.25 FTE call handlers and 19.37 FTE call handling supervisors.

What constitutes a 999 or 101 non emergency contact?

999 emergency calls for service:

2.5 An incident or crime is graded as an emergency if the incident is in progress and in which there is or is likely to be:

- A risk to life
- Use or immediate threat of violence
- Serious injury caused to a person
- Serious damage caused to property
- An offender is disturbed at the scene or has been detained and poses or is likely to pose a risk to other people

101 non-emergency calls for service:

2.7 All other contact is classed as non-emergency. There are several ways in which Devon and Cornwall Police manage this demand for service which is dependent on the circumstances and they seek to prioritise both the contact in terms of being answered or how quickly an officer is sent (if appropriate we may take the report over the phone without the need to send an officer or we may schedule an appointment) – priority incidents could include:

- Genuine concern for someone's safety
- An offender has been detained but poses no risk to others
- A witness or other evidence is likely to be lost
- A person involved is vulnerable or a repeat victim
- Identified force priorities (such as Domestic abuse; Hate crime; Missing persons; Roads; Sexual offence).

2.8 Therefore, a non-emergency call / contact for service is a crime or incident that has already happened and there is no emergency, this will include minor traffic collisions that do not require an emergency response or passing of information.

2.9 In April 2020 calls to the 101 service became free of charge nationally prior to this there was a maximum charge per call of 15p. This change was part of the national 101 contracting arrangements provided by the Home Office.

Call handler role in 101

2.10 Call handlers are at the front line of policing, providing that vital first point of contact with members of the public that either phone the 999 emergency-service or the 101 non-emergency service.

2.11 Call handlers within the 101 service provide also answer 999 calls when volumes are high or resources are constrained. The call handlers also answer 101 emails, carry out live 101 webchats and deal with online crime reports.

2.12 The role of a call handler is a wide and varied position comprising early, late and nights shifts, 7 days a week, 365 days per year. Call handlers are required to handle large volumes of calls, obtain and record accurate information, assess the situation and level of police response required and initiate the appropriate police action as rapidly as possible.

2.13 The 101 non-emergency service and 999 call handlers, are routinely dealing with traumatic incidents first-hand. It would not be therefore unusual for call handlers to be receiving details and listening to live incidents of suicide, serious injury, assault, fatalities or high risk missing people, for example and then the next call being similar in nature of its content or entirely different. The demand around those persons suffering mental health for call handlers is also significant. This role needs skill, understanding, adaptability, empathy, commitment and dedication.

2.14 The below link to a short video on the contact centre within Devon and Cornwall provides some further insight into the work carried out by call handlers. <https://youtu.be/bbMTAQ0zblU> . The variety and pressures faced within the contact centre have also been highlighted to great effect by the Call the Cops Channel 4 Documentary Series which completed its second series on 15th September.

Incident and Resolution Centre (IRC)

2.15 The Investigation and Resolution Centre (IRC) sits within the Contact and Resolution Command with the 101 and 999 call handlers and the radio despatch officers. The IRC was introduced in 2018 and is broken down to two areas; IRC Crime and IRC Incidents.

2.16 *IRC Crime* is a Force wide investigatory function that deals with crimes such as vehicle crime, shoplifting and violence without injury across the Force, ensuring that there is consistency in standards by one team across the whole of the Force area. They triage the crime, assess threat and risk, ensure the victim is properly safeguarded, develop an investigation plan and manage the investigation to the point of arrest or other means of finalisation. Although it is

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a Force wide function that is centrally managed within the CRC, the teams are based geographically within each Basic Command Unit (BCU). The team comprises 4 Inspectors, 8 Sergeants and 64 Police Constables.

2.17 *IRC incidents* are based in Force control rooms, they triage and manage all routine incidents that come into the control room through the various contact channels. They assess threat and risk and deal with the incident in the most appropriate way possible. IRC Incidents also deal with Early Service Recovery (ESR) complaints from members of the public, responding to complaints in an efficient and timely manner, so that they are resolved promptly and satisfactorily. IRC incidents also provide support to 101 email and calls at times of high demand. The team is comprised of 1 Inspector, 3 Sergeants and 2 Police Constables.

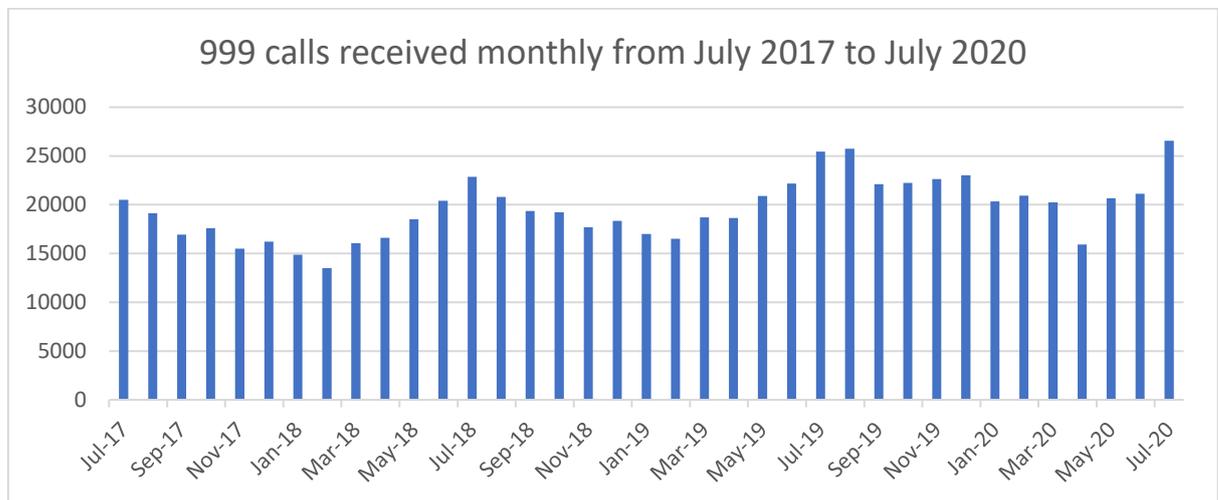
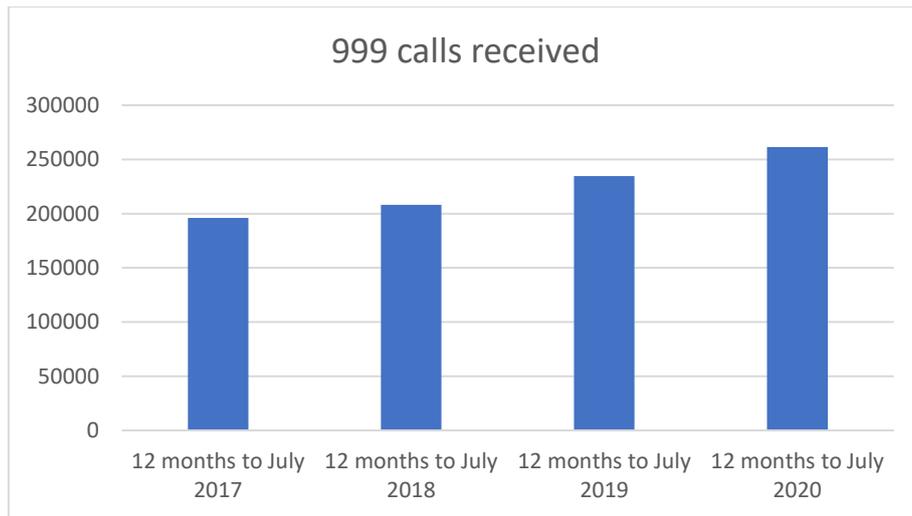
2.18 Previously operating via telephone and email this service has now been expanded to include digital appointments as part of the Devon and Cornwall police's handling of the COVID 19 pandemic, offering members of the public the opportunity to have face to face contact with police officers who are handling their crime or incident.

3. Demand for 101 and 999 contact services

3.1 Devon and Cornwall Police received over 1 million contacts in the 12 months to 31st July 2020. The number of calls being made to the 999-emergency line has continued to rise over the 4-year period. The trend for 101 non-emergency calls has also been on an upward trend and the use of alternative contact channels such as webchat has also grown considerably over this period. Demand for 101 in the 12 months to 31st July 2020 has reduced slightly which is not unexpected in view of COVID 19 restrictions and impact on communities.

999-emergency calls

3.2 In the 12 months to July 2020 there were 261,483 calls to the emergency 999 service for Devon and Cornwall Police. Over the last four years emergency calls for service have increased by 33.4% which is equivalent to 65,499 additional calls. The growth in 999 calls received is most evident between 2018-19 and 2019-20.



3.3 Average call handling times has increased reflecting both the growing complexity of the calls received by the call handlers and the need for enhanced risk assessments and safeguarding procedures to be carried out. In the last year the average call handling time for 999 calls which includes the average talk time and the average post call processing time was 8 minutes and 41 seconds – which saw the average time taken to deal with a 999 call increase by 1 minute 32 seconds compared with a year earlier.

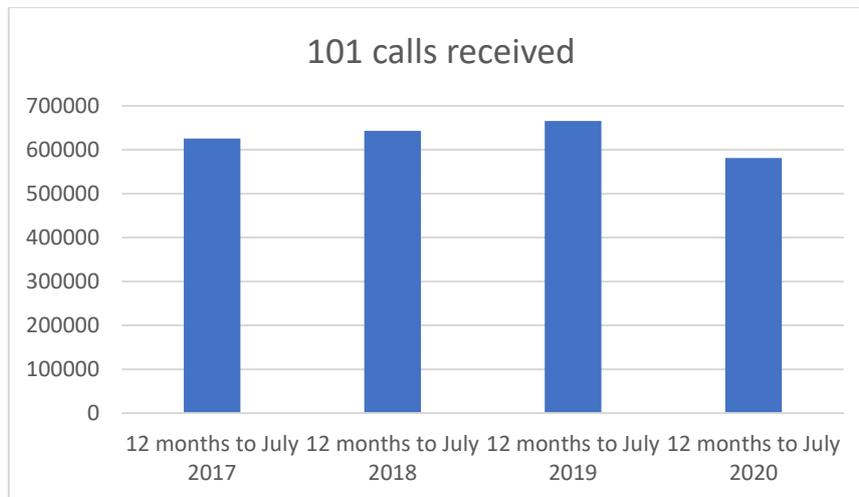
3.4 If the increase in average call handling time is applied to the volume of 999 calls answered in the 12 months to July 2020 this equates to an additional 6247 hours¹ of time spent dealing with 999 calls compared to the year earlier, which is equivalent to approximately 3.1 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) members of staff.

101 non-emergency calls

3.5 Calls to the 101 non emergency line have also been increasing into Devon and Cornwall Police. The last 12 months has seen a slight decrease in demand but

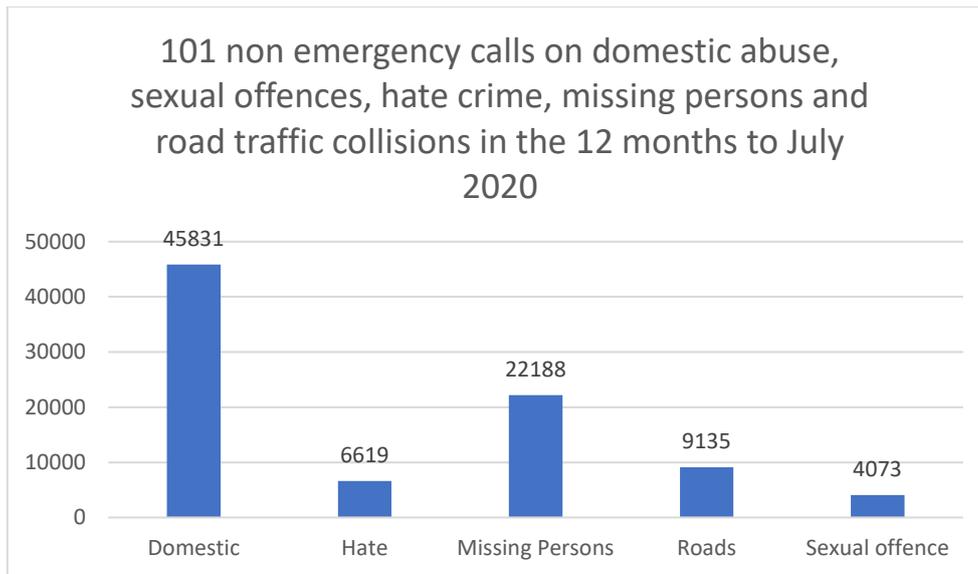
¹ Rounded to the nearest hour
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it is not yet clear to what extent this is a direct result of the pandemic and whether call demand trends will adjust over the longer term.



- 3.6 In the 12 months to July 2020 101 call demand reached just over 581,000. Alongside this demand there has been a 50% increase in contacts to 101 alternative methods (emails/online reports, texts and webchats) which is equivalent to 53,235 more contacts. These services are also provided by the 101 call handlers, although recent initiatives to provide additional support to the call handlers by enabling staff within the IRC and police office front desk staff to deal with 101 emails and online crime reports is providing additional resilience and support. If the demand picture for 101 calls and alternative 101 contact methods is combined there has been a 5% increase in the number of non-emergency contacts received since 2017.
- 3.7 The nature of calls into 101 are varied. Around 10% of the calls received into 101 are actually for other agencies, such as local authorities or health services².
- 3.8 The graph below provides a snapshot for the Panel regarding the volume of calls received into 101 on domestic violence, sexual violence, hate crime, missing persons and road traffic collisions. Many of these can be highly complex calls, requiring multiple risk assessments to be carried out by the call handler. Collectively these five categories of call in the 12 months to 31st July 2020 totalled 87,846 – over 240 per day.

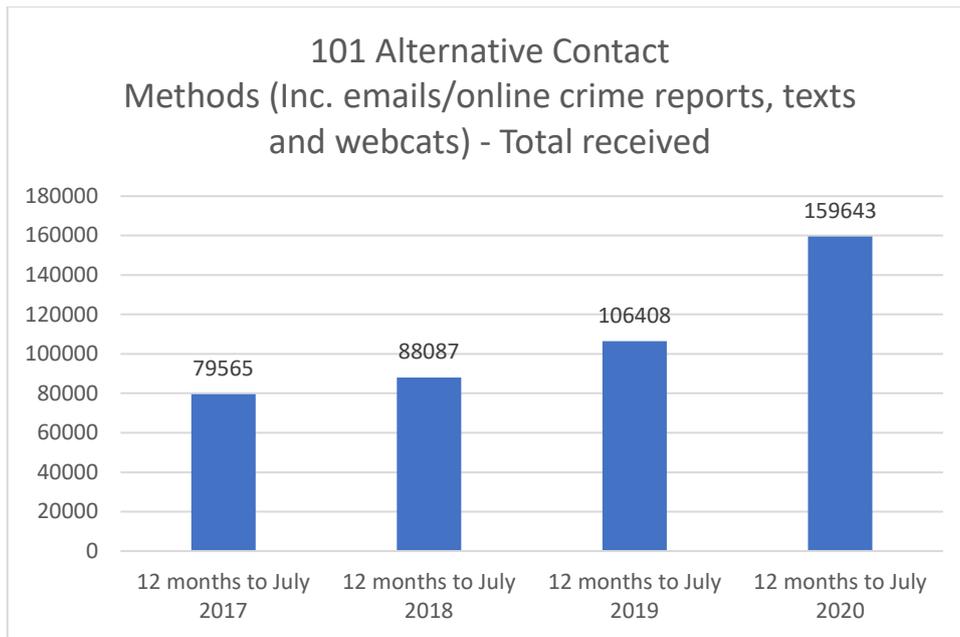
² Based on data capture exercises carried out in July 2020 within the 101 call centre
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- 3.9 The average duration of a 101 call has seen a notable increase over the past 12 months – increasing from 2 minutes 57 seconds in the 12 months to July 2019 to 5 minutes and 31 seconds in the year to July 2020. This increase will have been a result of a number of factors, including the need for additional risk assessments carried out by the call handler but also is likely to reflect the effective operation of the new Interactive Voice Recognition (IVR) system which will have directed calls that may have been shorter to the website or to recorded messages, such as lost property.

101 alternative contact methods

- 3.10 The Police and Crime Plan ‘Safe, Resilient and Connected Communities’ included a commitment to invest in alternative contact methods for 101 non-emergency services to provide the public with greater choice. These methods include 101 email, online crime reporting and live webchat as well as the online AskNED self-help directory.
- 3.11 Usage of alternative 101 contact methods (including Webchat) has more than doubled over the last 4 years from 79,565 in 2017 to 159,643 in the 12 months to July 2020.



3.12 The use of 101 emails and texts (including online crime reporting) has grown from 75,344 in the twelve months to July 2017 to over 131,000 in the 12 months to July 2020. Similarly since the full introduction of webchat in September 2018 we have increased from 8,738 webchats in the first 11 months of operation to over 28,000 in the twelve months to July 2020.

Public advice and communications

3.13 Recognising the significant demands placed on the contact centre through increased demand Devon and Cornwall Police continue to take steps to advise and inform the public about the best ways to contact the police in non-emergency situations. This includes regular use of social media and traditional advertising.

3.14 The Summer Policing Plan 2020 included a bespoke communications plan, which included:

- Social media content on Twitter, Facebook & Instagram
- Devon and Cornwall Alerts
- Engagement with stakeholder and community group - content on stakeholder websites, social media and digital screens
- Distribution of printed materials
- Digital screens in front offices
- Paid social media advertising to residents of Devon and Cornwall and visitors to the area
- Mobile phone banner advertising across key locations in Devon and Cornwall
- Digital screens at M5 services and Cornwall Services

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3.15 Below are some examples of social media graphics, traditional advertising posters and tweets from the campaign.



HMICFRS National Report into Call Handling and Control Rooms

3.16 In July 2020 HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) published a thematic report into contact handling and control rooms

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following the conclusion of their Integrated PEEL assessments of every force in England and Wales. **“A Call for Help - Police contact management through call handling and control rooms in 2018/19”**.

- 3.17 In their report HMICFRS highlight that the police service nationally is taking more calls that involve vulnerable people and dealing with mental health concerns and other complex problems. The report set out HMICFRS' expectations for all forces in this area for the future, rather than setting out specific recommendations for Chief Constables to adopt. The Commissioner has responded to the HMICFRS and will be regularly reviewing the Improvement Plans in place within Devon and Cornwall Police. A copy of the Commissioner's response is on the OPCC website³.

4. Resources, staffing and investment since 2016/17

Resources and staffing

- 4.1 Budgeted staffing levels have remained consistent within the budget over the past four years, with limited adjustments to reflect changes to supervisory arrangements. Current staffing levels are 191.25 FTE call handlers (including 40 new recruits joining in September and October) and 19.37 FTE supervisory staff for a 24/7 operation.
- 4.2 Turnover within the contact centre environment has been relatively high, at approximately 10%. This reflects both the competitive market-place for call handlers within Exeter and Plymouth and call handlers moving into new roles within the wider policing family, including call despatchers and police officers. To mitigate the impact of staff turnover on existing staff, welfare and performance of the service, the Chief Constable and Commissioner have authorised over recruitment at 11.9% within the contact centre for the past 12 months. This is one of the factors driving the Commissioners scrutiny of the 101 service during 2020/21.
- 4.3 During 2020 further investment has been made to increase resilience in the 999 and 101 call centres by utilising wider resources within Contact and Resolution Command. This has included training 999 despatchers and front desk staff to answer 999 and 101 calls and to respond to 101 emails in periods of low demand or via overtime and placing the necessary ICT infrastructure into those locations to enable them to provide this support.

³<https://devonandcornwall.s3.amazonaws.com/Documents/Our%20information/Response%20to%20HMIC%20Reports/A%20Call%20for%20Help%20-%20Police%20contact%20management%20through%20call%20handling%20and%20control%20rooms%20in%202018%202019.pdf>

- 4.4 This year due to COVID restrictions recruitment has continued with innovation. All recruitment has been completed virtually. Prior to this all recruitment of new staff would have been in person with candidates attending the Centre for assessments and interview. The new package has been re-designed to be able to undertake this process by way of digital platforms to enable candidates to undertake the process from their own homes or location of their choice. The recruitment has still maintained the same number of successful candidates to fill the planned vacancies.

Investments

- 4.5 The Commissioner has supported the Chief Constable to make a number of investments in contact services over the past four years, recognising the importance of the service to the public. These investments and improvements have taken place against the backdrop highlighted above of continued increases in demand for both 999 and 101 services and a growing complexity in the nature and duration of calls into the service. The programme for improvement continues to operate, adjusting to take account of emerging best practice, innovation and demand forecasts.

Technology

- 4.6 Since 2016/17, investment in technology has been a focal point of development, including the delivery of a new call handling platform which was essential to enable the introduction of new contact channels such as multi-channel webchat and the IVR. These have been substantial ICT change projects which were managed within the Forces' PRISM Programme. The total investment in 101 systems over the period has been £1.33 million. These investments were prioritised to reduce non-crime demand and enable priority calls to be managed more effectively.

- **2016:** Introduction of email access to 101 service.
- **2017:** Introduction of Ask NED: delivery of an online directory to provide answers to key non-emergency queries and issues.
- **2018:** AACC6 Call Platform introduced. The delivery of the AACC technical platform has enabled the introduction of multi stream call handling via webchat and the new Interactive Voice Recognition (IVR) call triage system.
- **2018:** Implementation of Verint: this demand management forecasting system enabled enhanced prediction of staffing and capacity requirements to meet predicted demand.
- **2018:** Introduction of a live Webchat service for non-emergency reports, updates and advice.
- **2019:** Pilot and introduction of Interactive Voice Recognition to self-triage calls. The IVR system was introduced on 101 to triage calls via an automated system

and directs them to call handlers or signposting messages depending on the nature of their call.

5. Current performance and waiting times

5.1 Service delivery within the contact centre should be considered in its broadest context, incorporating 101 calls, 999 calls and alternative methods of contact which are all handled by the same call handlers. During periods of high demand for 999 volumes, call handlers are often diverted away from answering 101 calls to prioritise emergency calls which pose the highest risk, with potential threat to life.

999 performance levels

5.2 Devon and Cornwall Police aim to answer 999 calls in 10 seconds and the baseline attainment the OPCC have set is to achieve this 91% of the time⁴. In the 12 months to July 2020 84% of 999 calls were answered within this threshold. However, the performance for this service standard does vary depending on time of day, day of week, month of year and volume of calls. A significant spike in demand for a 2 to 3-hour period can be hard to recover from, over a 24-hour period

101 Waiting times

5.3 As already identified within the OPCC Performance Report for September 2020, the average call wait time for all 101 lines is 8 minutes and 52 seconds. However, it is recognised that at peak times when both 999 and 101 call volumes are higher some callers will wait much longer to speak to a call handler.

5.4 The Panel have been updated previously on the introduction of the IVR system by Devon and Cornwall Police to its 101 line on the 22nd July 2019. The key aims of the new system are as follows:

- To reduce call waiting times – particularly for 101 priority calls relating to domestic abuse, sexual violence, missing people, hate crimes and road traffic collisions.
- To divert non-police matters away from the organisation in a more efficient way, via signposting and recorded messages.
- Improving initial contact and call routing to ensure more calls are resolved at the first point of contact and are directed to call handlers with the required skills.

5.5 Calls which are identified in the IVR as high priority include calls relating to: Domestic Abuse; Hate crime; Missing persons; Roads; Sexual offences. The latest Devon and Cornwall Service Standards cite an aim to answer these calls within 5 minutes. These calls are consistently being answered more quickly

⁴ Baseline is based on the 2 years to December 2015

and dealt with at the first point of contact. Average call answer times for the missing person line for example was 4 minutes and 9 seconds for the 12 months to July 2020 and all other non-urgent high priority lines had average call wait times below 6 minutes.

	Average time taken to answer in the 12 months to July 2020
Domestic	5 minutes 29 seconds
Hate	5 minutes 6 seconds
Missing Persons	4 minutes 9 seconds
Roads	4 minutes 28 seconds
Sexual Offence	5 minutes 44 seconds
Other New Report	21 minutes 38 seconds
Other Update Report	5 minutes 46 seconds

5.2 The waiting times for all other 101 calls over the 12 months to July 2020 is longer and these are callers who may benefit from alternative methods of contacting the police. Current Devon and Cornwall Police Service Standard sets an aim to answer these calls within 20 minutes. On average callers had to wait 21 minutes and 38 seconds to provide a new report and just under 23 minutes to give an update on a previously reported incident or crime.

6. Future development and investment in contact services and PCC activities

Ongoing developments

6.1 There is a continual programme of improvement in operation within the Contact Centre environment, led by Chief Superintendent Evans. The current areas of focus include:

- Front desk staff and IRC staff triaging and dealing with 101 emails and online crime reports to reduce the volume of demand into the 101 call handlers
- A pilot to ring-fence 999 calls to reduce the level of abstraction from 101 call handlers to support 999 call volumes – this pilot which commenced in late summer will be monitored closely over the next three months
- Ongoing improvements to the IVR system introduced in July 2019 to improve the experience for callers:

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- Exploring the scope to increase the categories of calls which will be prioritised within the IVR system to a 5 minute waiting time
 - Allowing for the immediate transfer of calls for key departments such as custody, firearms licensing and ticketing to reduce demand into the main queuing system.
 - Inclusion of waiting time information on the Devon and Cornwall Police website and its inclusion within the 'in call' messaging.
- Finalising the scope for a new Voice Activated Directory which will enable any caller into 101 to be automatically routed to the individual they wish to speak with rather than waiting in main queuing system.

6.2 The CRC Improvement Programme is being re-developed following Devon and Cornwall Police's work with BT over the first half of 2020 to develop a new Customer Contact Strategy. Key projects that will be taken forward under the new contact strategy include a new email triage system, the introduction of digital appointments with police officers and a digital agent to better direct members of the public to access the information and advice they need online. In late September the CRC will host a 2 day visit/informal peer review from Kent Police, at the request of the Commissioner, one of the leading forces for delivery of 101 services to support the development of a revised improvement plan.

PCC scrutiny and oversight

- 6.3 The Commissioner has marked this area of policing as Amber in the Police and Crime Plan Performance Measures since September 2019.
- 6.4 In the 12 months to 31st July 2020 the OPCC received 65 items of correspondence relating to the 101 service, the majority of which were related to waiting times. The OPCC will be carrying out a review of correspondence over the past two years as part of its upcoming scrutiny.
- 6.5 The Commissioner holds the Chief Constable to account for the delivery of the 101 service through a number of forums and meets on a fortnightly basis with the responsible lead officer for an update on performance and on progress with the Force's improvement plan. The Commissioner is also monitoring Devon and Cornwall Police's activity to take forward work on the recommendations made by HMICFRS in their recently published thematic report on call handling.
- 6.6 In the 2020/21 budget the Commissioner allocated £50,000 to the Chief Constable to carry out a review to determine whether existing capacity within the two contact centres was sufficient. The dynamic operating environment adopted during the COVID 19 pandemic has seen the rapid adoption of dispersed 101 and 999 service delivery, with 7 satellite control rooms in operation and home working for call handlers and supervisors. The learning from this experience is being captured and considered as part of the wider improvement plan and the initial £50,000 allocated will be used to support the

Commissioners priorities of piloting the reopening of some front desks in police stations.

- 6.7 In May 2020 the Commissioner set out her planned scrutiny activities for the remainder of 2020/21 which included a scrutiny panel review of 101 services. The scope of that scrutiny is currently being finalised and the scrutiny exercise will commence in October and report in December 2020.

OPCC Thematic Scrutiny on 101

- 6.8 ***How effectively does Devon and Cornwall Police’s approach to the delivery of 101 services within the IVR meet the needs of the public?***

This review will commence in October and report in December 2020. The review will focus on three key areas: defining and setting customer service standards, understanding and assessing the delivery services to the public; and continuous learning and development within the contact service. The OPCC will convene a bespoke OPCC Panel which includes existing scrutiny panel volunteers and councillor advocates which will be supported by task and finish activity led by the OPCC. The OPCC Panel’s work will be informed by focus groups, analysis of complaints and correspondence into OPCC and Force and public surveys.

Key lines of enquiry
Defining and setting customer service standards
What is the force’s definition and benchmark of ‘good customer service’ for non-emergency calls?
How does this differ between callers within the IVR system?
How does the force train call handlers in customer service?
How does the force understand the relationship between public confidence and 101 service delivery?
Delivering services to the public
How does the Force monitor and assess the performance of the 101 service?
What is the actual experience of callers to the 101 service for non priority lines?
How does this differ for victims, those unable to access digital services, vulnerable callers and protected groups?
How does the force collate, understand and act upon customer feedback received regarding 101 service?
How does the Force inform the public and stakeholders about how to contact the police in a non-emergency situation and the service levels that they can expect to receive?
Continuous learning and development:
How has the Force taken forward the findings of the interim evaluation of the IVR system presented to Joint Leadership Board in Autumn 2019?

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How is the Force learning from COVID -19 emergency arrangements and summer policing plans to influence future delivery of 101 across the year?

How does 101 performance information and insight support service development and investment planning within Devon and Cornwall Police?

6.9 The Commissioner and the Chief Constable have commenced discussions regarding the 2021/22 policing budget. Any additional requirements or investments associated with contact services will be considered through the agreed budget process over the next few months.

7. **Next steps**

7.1 The Commissioner and the OPCC would welcome further views from the Panel regarding what additional information they would like to receive regarding the actions of the Police and Crime Commissioner in respect of the 101 non-emergency service to assist them in carrying out their deep dive and help inform the Commissioner as she implements her own scrutiny processes.

Contact for further information:

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Report prepared on 16 September 2020