



Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Panel 25th September 2020

Update on the 101 Service

This report provides the Police and Crime Panel with an update on matters relating to the 101 service following its deep dive in September 2020 and the PCC's 101 scrutiny review.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In July 2020 the Commissioner announced that she would be carrying out a thematic scrutiny review of the 101 non-emergency telephone service in the second half of 2020, looking in particular at the extent to which the service is meeting the needs of the public.

2. Current performance of the 101 service

- 2.1 The Commissioner and the OPCC Executive continue to meet on a fortnightly basis with the Assistant Chief Constable and the Contact and Resolution Commander to receive updates on delivery of 101 services, performance levels and the progress of the existing improvement plan.
- 2.2 The past four months have seen continued improvement in performance within 101 services overall. The volume of calls answered within 10 minutes was at 70% for the 12 months to 31st December 2020 and an average wait time of 7 minutes and 16 seconds. This overall improvement reflects continued improvement in P2 caller waiting times which have been the area of most concern. Considerable effort and additional staffing due to low turnover have enabled this stronger performance and demonstrate the potential impact that additional staffing could have on service delivery in this area.

	Average time taken to answer In the 12 months to July 2020	Average time taken to answer In the 12 months to December 2020
Domestic	5 minutes 29 seconds	5 minutes 54 seconds
Hate	5 minutes 6 seconds	5 minutes 17 seconds
Missing Persons	4 minutes 9 seconds	5 minutes 7 seconds
Roads	4 minutes 28 seconds	4 minutes 41 seconds
Sexual Offence	5 minutes 44 seconds	6 minutes 0 seconds
Other New Report	21 minutes 38 seconds	17 minutes 9 seconds
Other Update Report	22 minutes 46 seconds	19 minutes 11 seconds



Average time taken to answer by month from July 2020:

	Jul-2020	Aug-20	Sept-20	Oct-2020	Nov-2020	Dec-2020
Domestic	8m 33s	8m 8s	7m 28s	5m 9s	3m 54s	4m 10s
Hate	9m 5s	7m 42s	6m 36s	4m 3s	3m 39s	3m 40s
Missing Persons	8m 24s	6m 46s	4m 20s	4m 8s	3m 47s	4m 19s
Roads	7m 12s	5m 52s	6m 2s	3m 49s	3m 12s	3m 9s
Sexual Offence	7m 47s	7m 17s	7m 20s	4m 41s	4m 19s	4m 43s
Other New Report	25m 58s	16m 48s	14m 32s	12m 32s	11m 26s	10m 37s
Other Update Report	26m 1s	18m 38s	15m 0s	12m 50s	11m 42s	11m 51s

3. The Police and Crime Panel's September 2020 Deep Dive into 101

3.1 At the September 2020 Police and Crime Panel meeting the Panel carried out a deep dive into the 101 service. To support that deep dive the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner provided a report setting out the detailed picture of contact management services, investment in the service and performance over the last four years.

3.2 The report also set out the outline terms of reference for the Commissioner's planned scrutiny of the 101 service following the introduction of the Interactive Voice Recognition (IVR) system and sought the views of the Panel on the scope of the scrutiny exercise.

3.3 At its meeting in September 2020 the Panel made three recommendations:

- 1) *The Panel recommends that the Police and Crime Commissioner changes the strategic performance indicator on the 101 Call System from AMBER to RED, indicating the severity of our concerns over its performance and the need for focused action in addition to scrutiny.*
- 2) *The Panel support early initiation of the planned OPCC Thematic Scrutiny, and request an additional key line of enquiry as follows. "What additional measures and/or investment is necessary to restore the effectiveness of the 101 system to acceptable levels?"*
- 3) *Consider the viability of non-emergency calls being transferred to an answering machine or call back service.*

3.4 At the November 2020 Police and Crime Panel meeting a verbal update was provided on the PCC's thematic scrutiny review. In response to questions from the Panel regarding the decision not to change the strategic performance indicator on 101 from AMBER to RED the Commissioner advised the Panel that she did not consider an amendment to be appropriate while the scrutiny activity was taking place. However the Commissioner affirmed that the grading, and the Panel's recommendation would be considered in January 2021 once the scrutiny process had concluded.

4. **The PCC's 101 Scrutiny Review**

The scrutiny process

- 4.1 In November 2020 the Commissioner convened a bespoke 101 scrutiny panel which brought the Commissioner together with members of the PCC's Independent Use of Police Powers Community Scrutiny Panel, Victim Support and two PCC Councillor Advocates to carry out the scrutiny review. The Commissioner's considerable thanks go to all of the members of the 101 Scrutiny Panel who devoted considerable time, energy and insight to this important work.
- 4.2 The Panel met on four occasions over November and December 2020 and considered a broad range of evidence prepared and provided by the OPCC and Devon and Cornwall Police. This included the results of surveys, listening exercises and focus groups carried out with Contact Officers already working in the 101 service. The Panel also received presentations from senior policing leads, corporate communications and performance specialists within Devon and Cornwall Police and received an input from the National Digital Public Contact Programme.
- 4.3 The Scrutiny Review focused on four key themes:
- defining and setting customer service standards;
 - delivering services to the public;
 - providing information, advice and education; and
 - service development and investment.
- 4.4 Within these broad headings the 101 Scrutiny process considered a range of questions, including: exploring the quality of the service; the service standards that Devon and Cornwall Police commit to providing; the experience that the public and other callers to 101 receive; current plans for development of the 101 service; and how Devon and Cornwall Police understand, assess and measure the service that they provide. Included within the review were two specific questions raised by the Police and Crime Panel at its deep dive in September 2020 concerning required additional measures or investment and answering machines or call back services.

Findings of the 101 Scrutiny Review

- 4.5 The PCC's 101 Scrutiny Findings and Recommendations Report was published on Thursday 28th January 2021 and can be found [here](#).

Key findings from the 101 Scrutiny Panel

"The Panel recognised the primacy of 999 calls and the need to prioritise the answering of emergency calls within the control room. The Panel further recognised the continued increase in calls to 999 and of the number of contacts being made across the 101 contact channels (which included email, online reporting and webchat), how average call handling times have increased reflecting both the growing complexity of calls received by Contact Officers and the need for enhanced risk assessments and safeguarding procedures to be carried out.

The Panel's overall conclusion is that the existing 101 telephone service provides a good quality of response to members of the public and to other callers when they get through to the service. Contact Officers are well trained and provide good customer service and advice to the caller in line with the expectations set out in Devon and Cornwall Police's published service standards.

However, the Panel is not assured that the current 101 service arrangements are meeting the needs of those members of the public who call 101 about matters which do not fall into the P1 category (i.e. all calls which do not relate to missing persons, domestic abuse, harassment, stalking, sexual offences, hate crime, concern for welfare or incidents on the road). The introduction of the new Interactive Voice Recognition (IVR) system to 101 has provided a stronger service for certain callers to 101 and has helped the police to identify and prioritise crime types where they consider vulnerability is higher. The Panel was concerned that too many callers to 101 about other matters were having to wait a considerable period of time before being able to speak to someone. The Panel recognised that many of these calls may be for non-police matters but there is limited data available to understand the subject matter of the calls being made and thus to determine alternative pathways.

It is the Panel's view that the police service is responsible for the experience of the member of the public who has chosen to contact them. This responsibility should be front, and centre of the strategic approach taken to all methods of contact that the public may experience, both in terms of initial contact and any subsequent interactions. For example, introducing a clear timeframe in service standards for the provision of updates to victims would provide a better service to the public and help to alleviate pressure on the 101 telephone service.

The Panel recognised that a series of steps were already underway to seek to deliver improvements in the service that is provided to callers to 101. These were welcomed and were likely to be already contributing to the improved waiting times in the final months of 2020. The Panel considered that a significant, sustained and whole force approach to public contact was required to ensure that the 101 service is better able to meet the needs and expectations of the public and to support resilience in the service. Whilst longer term technological advancements may have a significant impact on these issues it is the Panel's conclusion that additional action to increase staffing levels should be considered in the short to medium term to improve the service that is provided on the 101 service. “

- 4.6 The 101 Scrutiny Panel have made a series of 12 recommendations for consideration by the Chief Constable who is responsible for the delivery of 999, 101 and other contact services.

Recommendations from the 101 Scrutiny Panel

The public's experience of the 101 telephone service
1. The Panel recommends that the Chief Constable reviews the existing service standard of 20 minutes for P2 calls by 31 st March 2021 and considers setting a revised service standard of 10 minutes or less for all call types and a clear, costed plan of action to support its delivery of service standards. Service standards on waiting times should be focussed on the percentage of callers answered in that time period not the average waiting time.

2. The Panel recommends that the Chief Constable considers by 31 st March 2021 whether the IVR is adding value in its current format and whether changes should be made to the IVR system to re-introduce a triage assessment at the start of the call, in particular for the P2 line.
3. The Panel recommends that the Chief Constable consider by 31 st March 2021 revising Devon and Cornwall Police's service standards for victims to include a clear time period within which victims can expect to receive an update after initial contact with the police and that this expectation is communicated to the public and performance against it is measured and published.
Understanding and managing demand for the 101 Service and Wider Public Contact
4. The Panel recommends that Devon and Cornwall Police build a clear evidence base on the nature of calls to 101 and that this information is used to inform discussions with partners to seek to reduce the volume of unnecessary calls coming into the system and with the public to help direct them to the right services.
5. The Panel recommends that Devon and Cornwall Police develop a force-wide, community orientated and evidence informed Public Contact Strategy which brings together all aspects of its public contact, including the role of corporate communications, victim care, investigating officers, local policing and front desks in providing contact services to the public.
6. That Devon and Cornwall Police should ensure it fully explores the potential that public enquiry offices and their staff can play in providing 101 services to the public.
Investment: staffing, skill retention and technology
7. The Panel recommends that the Chief Constable considers by 31 st March 2021 re-prioritising work under the PRISM programme to speed up the introduction of the upcoming service improvements which have the biggest potential to improve the public's experience (the Call Back Service, in call messaging and the Voice Activated Directory).
8. While longer term technological changes may reduce levels of demand for 101 the Panel recommends that interim solutions, including an increase in staffing, should be considered by the Chief Constable and, if budgetary pressures allow, be included within the 21/22 budget.
9. The Panel recommends that Devon and Cornwall Police consider what options might exist to reduce turnover within the 101 contact centre, including the opportunity provided by remote sites to cover a wider labour market.
Public information and communications
10. The Panel recommends that Devon and Cornwall Police gives much greater priority to communicating regularly with the public about 101, using traditional media, advertising campaigns and community networks and local publications. The focus of engagement should be: to improve awareness about what can be dealt with by 101 and what should be 999 or another agency, to inform them of the levels of service they should expect to receive (including waiting times) and performance against these standards: and to guide them towards alternative contact channels.
11. The Panel recommends that a formal assessment is carried out by 30 th June 2021 to compare the relative costs, benefits and merits for the public and for policing, of the existing Devon and Cornwall website and the new national policing single online home platform.
12. The Panel recommend that a survey and assessment of Ask NED is carried out by 30 th June 2021 to understand how the system is being used by the public and whether it is meeting their needs.

Next steps and Commissioner's Conclusion

- 3.7 As identified by the 101 Scrutiny Panel in its review there are some significant challenges that need to be considered. The introduction of the IVR system has

led to an enhanced service for some callers but a reduced level of service for others. The Panel's view is that service standard waiting times set by Devon and Cornwall Police is currently too long at 20 minutes and that a standard of 10 minutes would be more appropriate. Valuable technology advancements to improve customer service such as a call back service and in call waiting times are on the horizon but still some way off. Staffing levels have remained static despite increased demand and complexity of calls.

- 3.8 The Commissioner has written formally to the Chief Constable to ask him to consider the findings and recommendations of the 101 Scrutiny Panel and to respond by the end of February 2021. This process is an appropriate recognition of the operational independence of the Chief Constable.
- 3.9 While a formal response from the Chief Constable is awaited action has already begun to be taken in some areas. This includes the Chief Constable's proposed investment of 22 additional staff within the contact centre to target peak periods, changes to the IVR to divert custody and other calls away from contact officers planned and bringing forward recruitment to strengthen summer capacity for summer 2021.
- 3.10 With respect to the requests made by the Police and Crime Panel at its September 2020 meeting.
- Changing of 101 strategic indicator to Red (Action Being Taken) from Amber (Under Scrutiny)

Following completion of the scrutiny review the Commissioner has determined that the indicator should move to Red. This decision has been made despite a notable increase in the percentage of calls answered within 10 minutes in the 12 months to December 2020 – with 70% of calls answered within 10 minutes. The Panel have identified a series of recommendations, in particular to seek to improve the public's experience when calling P2 lines which require action to be taken and these are currently being considered by the Chief Constable.

- Identification of required investment to return service to acceptable levels

The Panel did not specify what it considered to be an 'acceptable level'. The Scrutiny Panel considered that a waiting time service standard of 10 minutes would be more appropriate and have recommended that the Chief Constable considers reviewing his existing standard of 20 minutes for P2 calls. Devon and Cornwall Police have been unable to provide modelling to identify staffing levels for that are required to meet a specific service standard of 10 minutes. However demand modelling on a range of measures is taking place in the first three months of 2021 as part of Devon and Cornwall Police's new two year plan for contact services.

- Consideration of the use of answering machines or call back services on the 101 line

The Panel specifically explored this issue with the Contact and Resolution Commander as part of its evidence sessions. A call back functionality is planned to be developed once the upgraded telephony system is in place in

September 2021. No final timeframe for its delivery is in place and the Panel have recommended that the Chief Constable consider speeding up the delivery of this service given its likely benefit to the public.

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