



Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Panel

27th January 2023

Update Report on Contact Services within Devon and Cornwall Police

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report provides an update to the Panel on actions taken by the Police and Crime Commissioner on contact services and performance since the Panel's last meeting on 25th November 2022.

2. Context

- 2.1 As the Panel are aware the delivery of contact services is a responsibility of the Chief Constable of Devon and Cornwall Police who has operational independence in law. The role of the Commissioner is to set the strategic priorities for policing through the Police and Crime Plan and to hold the Chief Constable to account for the delivery of an effective and efficient police service.
- 2.2 At its meeting on 25th November 2022 the Panel received a report from the Commissioner on key actions taken by the Commissioner in relation to contact services. The report set out investment and scrutiny activities over the Commissioner's term of office and future planned activity. The report also set out key steps being taken by Devon and Cornwall Police to deliver performance improvement which included the introduction of a new Rapid Response Team; a switchboard triage function for all 101 calls by the end of 2022, technology enhancements in early 2023 and the planned re-opening of 5 police front desks.
- 2.3 At the November meeting the Panel requested to receive a report at each meeting going forward on contact services and the actions being taken by the Commissioner in this area.
- 2.4 This report relates to action, activity and progress over a period of seven weeks from the last Panel meeting with the new Chief Constable Will Kerr being in post for the final two weeks of that period.

3. Activity since the November 2022 Panel Meeting

- 3.1 A significant programme of work continues to operate under the leadership of the Chief Constable and Deputy Chief Constable. The focus of this work is to deliver clear and sustainable improvements across contact services and includes a priority focus on improving the speed at which 999 calls are answered. This work is being managed as part of Devon and Cornwall Police's wider response to His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) decision to move Devon and Cornwall Police to an enhanced level of monitoring 'Engage' following its 2022 PEEL inspection.
- 3.2 The Commissioner receives regular updates on progress on improving contact services through formal reports to the Policing and Crime Joint Executive Board, attendance by the OPCC Executive Team at Force improvement boards and through her regular bilateral discussions with the Chief Constable.
- 3.3 As the Commissioner set out to the Panel at its November 2022 meeting she has prioritised improved performance on answering 999 emergency calls combined with the reintroduction of triage services onto all 101 lines to ensure that people phoning for a non-emergency can speak to an operator early on. In November 2022 the Commissioner wrote to the Temporary Chief Constable and set out her clear expectations in terms of the immediate focus of service improvement in four areas:
- i. 90% of 999 calls should be answered within 10 seconds by the end of 2022
 - ii. All 101 calls (P1 and P2) should be triaged by the end of November 2022
 - iii. The call-back function of AACC7 must be delivered as a top priority
 - iv. Re-opening of front desks with a new plan for the next six locations
- 3.4 With respect to the immediate actions and activities that were set out in the November 2022 report to the Panel the Commissioner can confirm that:
- 3.4.1 The new switchboard triage service for 101 calls has now been implemented for P1 as well as P2 calls. Going forward all 101 callers will speak to a call handler at the start of the process.
- 3.4.2 The Rapid Response Model which has posted an additional 19 officers to the Contact Centre is now fully in place. This model enables trained Contact Officers to focus on answering 999 calls and reduces the number of process changes on any incident between the call handlers and resource dispatch officers to free up capacity.
- 3.4.3 Recruitment campaigns will operate in January and March with vetting and on-boarding of further new staff prioritised across the wider organisation.

3.4.4 Work is continuing to deliver the national policing system called Single Online Home by March 2023 which will play a key role in reducing repeat email traffic by ensuring that key information is provided at first contact. Single Online Home is a national digital contact programme which provides a consistent online contact platform for all citizens in England and Wales.

3.4.5 All six new front offices will be open by the end of January 2023: Tiverton (October 2022); Newton Abbot, Penzance and Truro (November 2022); and Bude and Falmouth (January 2023). Opening hours are also continuing to be extended as locations reach full staffing levels and training is completed.

3.5 The November 2022 report to the Panel provided a timeline for delivery of two ICT contact services which are fundamental to service improvements for public contact. The go live for the new AACC7 telephony system was expected to take place by the end of January 2023. This go live date has been subject to previous delays due to system and supply issues and some issues still exist and it is now expected in February/March 2023. The timeline for the delivery of the new 101 call back service (which is scheduled to be in place in spring 2023) will be confirmed once AACC7 has gone live as this work cannot commence until the new system is in place. This is one of the biggest risks to success in improving the service received by the public.

4. Performance developments since the November 2022 Panel Meeting

4.1 The Police and Crime Plan Performance Report which is a separate report to this Panel meeting includes the agreed Scorecard measures on:

- Number of customer contacts (999, 101 and online)
- 999 wait times
- 101 (P1 and P2) wait times

4.2 The latest Scorecard which reports performance for the 12 months to November 2022 states:

- Customer Contacts reduced from 993,666 to 954,114. This reduction is a result of a reduced volume of 101 calls with a continued increase being seen in 999 call volumes.
- 999 average wait times increased by 1 second to 26 seconds compared to the figures reported to the last Panel meeting.
- Average waiting times for 101 P1 calls was 19 minutes and 32 seconds – an increase of 1 minute 38 seconds from the figures reported to the November Panel.
- The average waiting time for 101 P2 calls was 40 minutes and 10 seconds - an increase of 2 minutes and 4 seconds from the figures reported to the November Panel.

- 4.3 This variable performance was anticipated and is largely due to the implementation of the new crime Recording system known as NICHE which was implemented across all Force business areas in November 2022. The scale of this change from the previous system has had a direct impact on the operation of the contact centre as officers and staff are trained to work within the new frameworks and work around practices are implemented.
- 4.4 Whilst the Scorecard does not show an improvement in performance the Panel will recognise that the timeframe covered by the Scorecard predates the introduction of the measures that were outlined to the Panel at its November meeting. The Panel will also appreciate that it will take some time for improvements in waiting times to reflect into twelve month rolling average figures. The Commissioner does expect improvements to begin to be more evident once data from December and January is included in the rolling average and as the short-term performance impacts from the migration to NICHE dissipates.
- 4.5 Key performance data, including call waiting times for 999 and 101, are being tracked by the Executive of Devon and Cornwall Police on a daily, weekly and monthly basis as improvements are deployed to understand and assess their impact. Twelve month rolling average data is important due to the relative peaks and troughs in performance that can result from variances in demand such as our busy summer season or one-off emergencies such as adverse weather. However, given the focus on service improvement the Commissioner will also be sharing monthly data with the Panel as part of her updates on contact services, including the percentage of 999 calls answered within 10 seconds. Devon and Cornwall Police's performance data shows that for December 2022 waiting times were:
- 999 calls: 18 seconds
 - 101 P1 calls: 21 minutes and 39 seconds
 - 101 P2 calls: 35 minutes and 50 seconds
- 4.6 The Commissioner will update the Panel on January performance verbally at the meeting due to the timescales for the submission of this report.
- 4.7 For future Police and Crime Panel meetings the existing Police and Crime Plan Scorecard will be supplemented with additional performance measures for 999 and 101 services which looks at monthly performance with a new monthly baseline. The report will also include the 999 data for Devon and Cornwall Police that is published on police.uk every month as part of the Home Office's National League Table. That data which includes both average waiting times and the percentage of calls answered within 10 seconds is published monthly with the latest data available being for November 2022 (which was published at the start of January 2023).

5. Forward Look

- 5.1 The new Chief Constable took up his post on 29th December 2022 and is continuing the substantial 'whole force' response to improving contact services that was instigated by Temporary Chief Constable.
- 5.2 The Commissioner will continue to hold the Chief Constable to account for the delivery of improvements in relation to her expectations set out in the November 2022 letter and the HMICFRS Improvement Plans. With respect to the four areas for immediate focus set out in the Commissioner's letter:
- i. The percentage of 999 calls answered within 10 seconds is subject to weekly and monthly monitoring and an update on January performance will be provided at the Panel meeting.
 - ii. 101 triage services are now operational for both P1 and P2 lines.
 - iii. A revised timeline for the introduction of call-back services will be confirmed once AACC7 is in place following delays to the January 2023 go-live date.
 - iv. The programme for the re-opening of the next six front offices will be confirmed once the budget and precept process is completed.
- 5.3 In addition to the activity set out in Section 3 of this report a wider programme continues to be progressed by Devon and Cornwall Police as part of its HMICFRS Improvement Plan, including medium term (3-6 months) and longer term (6-12 months) activities. This includes the recent completion of a peer review assessment by experts in public contact systems from Humberside Police and the next steps following the process review carried out by external specialists both of which the Commissioner referred to at the November 2022 Panel meeting. The Commissioner has committed to sharing the Improvement Plan with the Panel once HMICFRS have provided their full PEEL report to enable the Chief Constable to determine if any additional actions need to be included. This final report has not yet been received.
- 5.4 In November 2022 the Panel also considered an update on the actions taken by Devon and Cornwall Police in response to the 12 Recommendations made in the Commissioner's 101 Scrutiny Review from January 2021. The Panel supported the Commissioner's intention to discuss the findings of the scrutiny report and the outstanding recommendations with the new Chief Constable. The Commissioner will take forward these discussions as part of her discussions with the Chief Constable in early 2023 and the Panel will receive an update on this matter at its next meeting.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 Over the seven weeks since the last Panel meeting there has been progress made in implementing the key immediate actions identified by Devon and Cornwall Police to seek to deliver improved waiting times in 999 and 101 contact services. However, it

is important to recognise that there is a significant programme of work to take forward and that Devon and Cornwall Police are at an early stage in that programme.

- 6.2 The impact that actions within the programme have on performance levels and waiting times is subject to daily and weekly monitoring to determine their impact and track progress. It will take some time for improvements to be fully evident in performance data, in particular for the 12 monthly rolling average performance measures for 999 and 101 calls which are part of the Police and Crime Plan Scorecard. In order that the Panel is enabled to review, scrutinise and support the Commissioner's actions in this area the existing Police and Crime Plan Performance Scorecard will be supplemented by a new performance framework for 999 and 101 calls which examines performance on a month by month basis.
- 6.3 The key focus over the coming months will be to deliver the next phases of activity and to ensure that they translate into improved performance and service stability for the residents of Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. The Commissioner will be continuing to work closely with the Chief Constable to scrutinise progress and to hold him to account on behalf of the public.
- 6.4 Devon and Cornwall Police also remain subject to regular monitoring by HMICFRS as part of 'Engage' and the Commissioner and Chief Constable will report to the next Police Performance Oversight Group chaired by His Majesty's Chief Inspector in March 2023.
- 6.5 The Commissioner remains grateful to the Panel for its attention on contact services and welcomes its continued scrutiny and support in relation to her actions to assist in delivering improved performance for the public in this critical area. The Commissioner will continue to provide reports to the Panel on this area of activity at each meeting as requested.

Contact for further information:

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