



Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Panel
12th September 2025

OFFICE OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER'S REPORT:

Update on contact services

1. Introduction

- 1.1 There are various ways that members of the public can contact Devon and Cornwall Police whether in an emergency or non-emergency. This includes the 999 and 101 telephone service, online, or in person through a public enquiry office (PEO).
- 1.2 Whilst it is the operational duty of the Chief Constable to deliver an efficient and effective contact service, it is the responsibility of the Police and Crime Commissioner to scrutinise its delivery and performance.
- 1.3 This report details the performance of Devon and Cornwall Police's contact services and how the Commissioner is assured by improved service delivery over the past 12 months.

2. Background

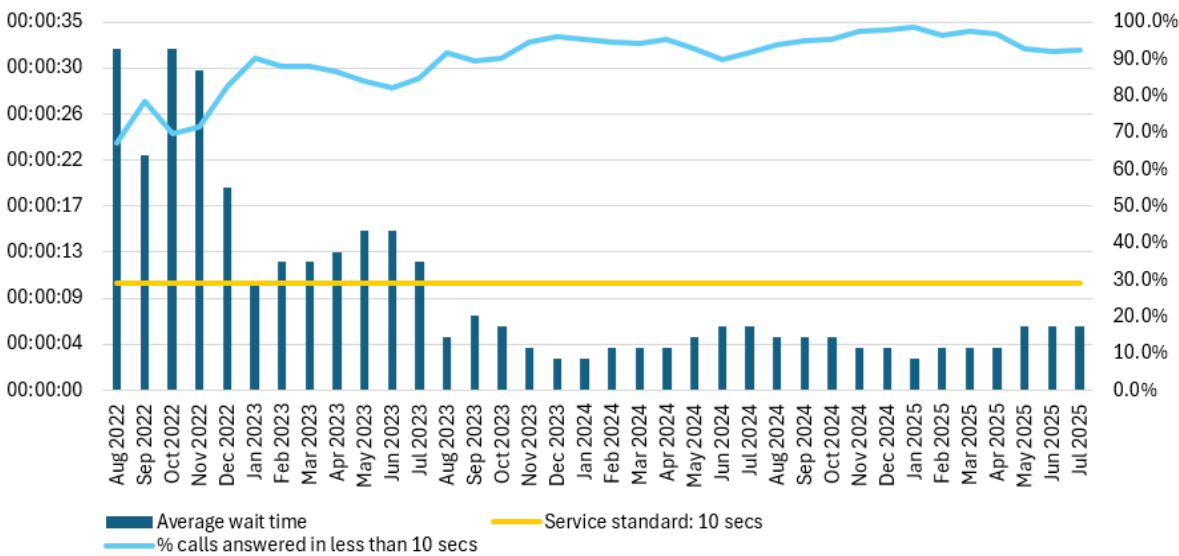
- 2.1 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) regularly inspects the force's contact services. Following inspections taking place in 2021-22 and 2023-25, HMICFRS judged Devon and Cornwall Police's contact offer to be 'inadequate' in responding to members of the public, largely due to failings and prolonged wait times in the 999 and 101 telephone service.
- 2.2 Following their 2023-25 inspection, HMICFRS formally opened a 'Cause for Concern' in relation to the force's management of contact. This was mainly due to their management of non-emergency calls, long delays in answer times, and high abandonment, making it difficult for the public to contact the police to report non-urgent matters.
- 2.3 Over the past three years the force has made several changes to improve performance within the Contact and Resolution Command (CRC); most notably

the introduction of new technology, improvements in the retention of staff, a review of processes, and the introduction of a performance framework. These improvements led to HMICFRS formally closing their ‘Cause for Concern’ relating to contact in September 2024.

3. 999

- 3.1 In an emergency the public can contact the police by dialling 999. In the 12 months to July 2025, Devon and Cornwall police received 300,447 calls to the 999 service, equating to 823 calls per day. This is similar to the number of calls received in the previous year at 312,296 (-3.8%).
- 3.2 In the last 12 months to July 2025, members of the public waited an average of 5 seconds for their 999 call to be answered by police. **This is 13 seconds quicker** than the time taken two years prior¹ (18 seconds) and is consistent with the time taken in the previous 12 months² (5 seconds).
- 3.3 The national standard for all police forces is to answer 90% of 999 calls within 10 seconds or under. The force has consistently met this target over the past 12 months, with 95.2% of calls responded to within 10 seconds in the 12 months to July 2025. This is 14.3% higher than the proportion answered 2 years prior¹ and 2.6% higher than the previous 12 months².
- 3.4 Whilst performance often fluctuates in periods of high demand, particularly in the busier summer months, over the past three years Devon and Cornwall Police have continued to reduce their 999-wait time and improve the proportion of calls

Monthly 999 call answer times, Devon and Cornwall Police



¹ 12 months to July 2023

² 12 months to July 2024

answered within the service target of 10 seconds.

3.5 The force has also improved their rankings in the national 999 league tables.

According to the latest data published by Police.uk, Devon and Cornwall Police were ranked 19th out of 44 forces for the proportion of calls answered within 10 seconds (89.4%³, June 2025); a mid-table position. This is 16 places higher than compared to 3 years prior where they were towards the bottom of the table, at 35 out of 44 forces (63.1%, June 2022).

4. 101

4.1 In a non-emergency, members of the public can contact the police through the 101-telephone service. In the 12 months to July 2025, Devon and Cornwall police received 231,573 calls to 101, or 634 calls per day. This is an 11.8% increase on the number of calls received in the previous year, or an additional 24,436 calls.

4.2 Devon and Cornwall Police has made several changes to 101 over the past three years to improve its service offer to the public. Including:

Switchboard (September 2022). Switchboard is now the first point of contact for 101 callers. Callers will speak to a contact officer who will triage their call to the most appropriate line, whether that be placement into the 101 queue, a priority line, or referral to another organisation or service. The force aims to answer all 101 calls at switchboard within 30 seconds.

Callback function (September 2023). Callers to 101 are now offered a callback if they do not wish to wait on the phone whilst in the 101 queue. In selecting a callback, the caller does not lose their place in the queue. Once the caller has reached the top of the queue, a Contact Officer will call them back (to a maximum of 3 attempts). In the 12 months to July 2025, 41,956 callbacks were made to 101 callers, at an average wait time of 18 minutes and 5 seconds⁴. Most callbacks were made within 1 hour of the original call (97.2%) and almost all callbacks successfully re-contacted the caller (98.2%).

Ringfencing (November 2024). The introduction of ringfencing technology, which automatically allocates 999 and 101 calls according to the number of available Contact Officers, has enabled improved demand modelling and a more efficient allocation of calls within the control room.

³ data published by Police.uk includes the time taken for BT to transfer the call to the force's contact centre. This is not included in the force's calculations. Therefore, there is always a small variance between data published by Police.uk and Devon and Cornwall Police for the same period.

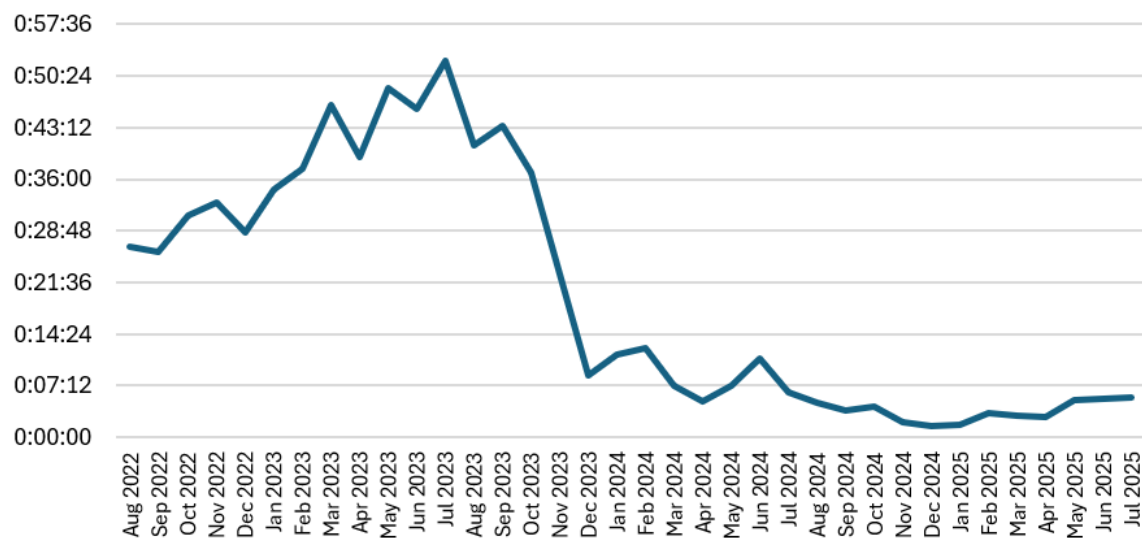
⁴ average wait time for the first callback attempt

Implementation of a performance framework. The development of a detailed performance framework has enabled wider management of contact performance across individual, team, and departmental levels.

4.3 The changes outlined have significantly reduced wait times for 101 callers. In the 12 months to July 2025, the average wait time for a 101 call was **3 minutes and 34 seconds**. This is **32 minutes quicker than the average time taken two years prior**⁵ (35 minutes and 51 seconds) and 11 minutes quicker than the previous 12 months⁶ (14 minutes 13 seconds).

4.4 The reduction in average 101 wait time can be seen in the graph below.

Monthly 101 call answer times (average), Devon and Cornwall



4.5 As changes to the 101 service have been implemented and wait times have improved, Devon and Cornwall Police have amended their service level agreement. Previously the force's locally agreed target was to answer 90% of 101 calls within **20** minutes. In November 2024, this changed to reflect improved performance, and the force now aim to answer 75% of calls within **5** minutes.

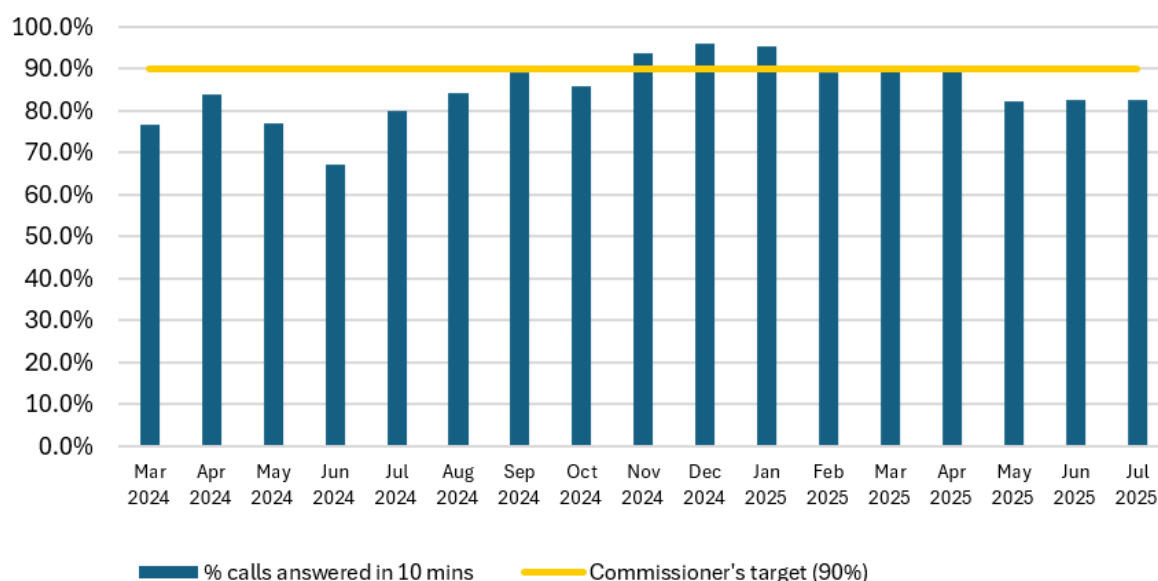
4.6 At the start of the Commissioner's new term of office in May 2024, as 101 performance began to improve, the Commissioner set the force a target of answering 90% of 101 calls within **10** minutes. For consistency, the Commissioner continues to monitor this measure, and the force report this in their monthly performance reports, in addition to their locally agreed target of answering 75% of calls in 5 minutes.

⁵ 12 months to July 2023

⁶ 12 months to July 2024

4.7 In the 12 months to July 2025, 88.8% of 101 calls were answered in the Commissioner's target of **10** minutes. Despite yearly performance falling short of the Commissioner's 90% target, the threshold was met or exceeded in 5 months of the year; November and December 2024, and January, March and April 2025. In the busier summer months when demand is higher, particularly May, June and July 2025, this has been more difficult to achieve, with compliance at around 82%.

Percentage (%) of 101 calls answered in 10 minutes, per month, Devon and Cornwall



4.8 The Commissioner remains assured that answering 90% of 101 calls within 10 minutes is an achievable target and will continue to monitor the force's performance in this area.

4.9 As wait times to the 101 service have decreased, so have the number of abandoned calls. When 101 wait times were longer, callers to the service would often abandon their call. This was particularly concerning, especially where members of the public may not have called back to report the crime or incident.

4.10 In the 12 months to July 2025, 11.3% of calls made to the 101 service were abandoned. This is a 13.9% decrease when compared to two years prior⁷, and a 19.0% decrease on the previous year when abandonment was at 30.3%⁸.

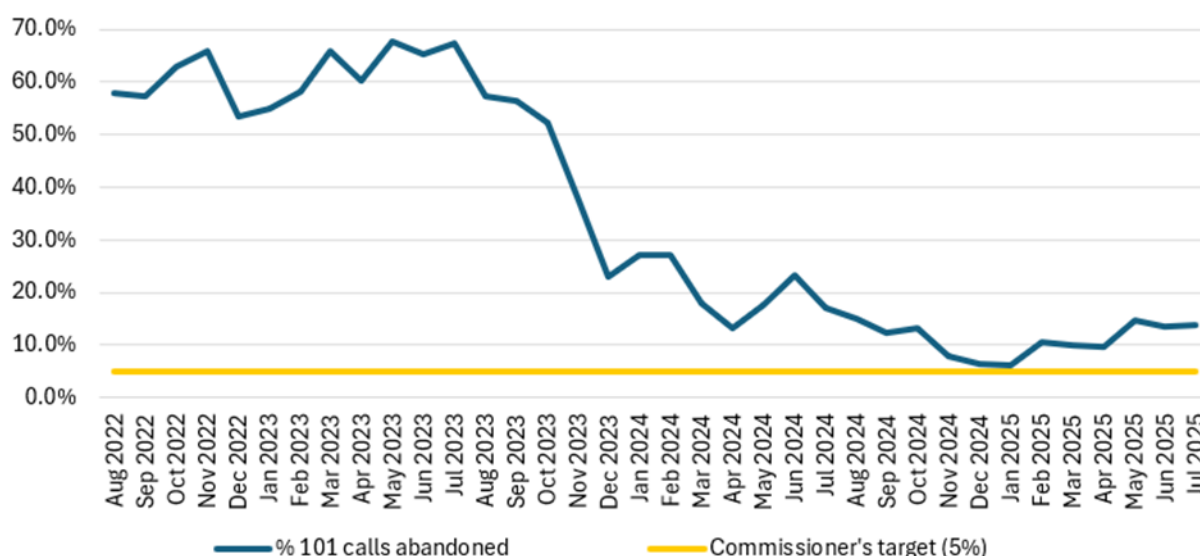
4.11 The Commissioner has set the force a target of less than 5% of 101 calls to be abandoned; a target also adopted by HMICFRS. Whilst the data for the 12 months to July 2025 shows this target has not yet been met (11.3%), the

⁷ 12 months to July 2023

⁸ 12 months to July 2024

Commissioner remains assured that abandonment of 101 calls continues to decrease, and the force remain on track to achieve the target.

Percentage (%) of 101 calls abandoned, per month, Devon and Cornwall



5. Online reports

5.1 In a non-emergency the public can also contact the police online via their website⁹. In the 12 months to July 2025, 72,379 online reports were received by Devon and Cornwall Police, equating to an average of 6,032 reports per month.

5.2 The force aims to respond to all online contact within 24 hours. In the 12 months to July 2025, 85.6% of online reports were responded to within the force's service standard of 24 hours. Across the year, the average wait time was less than 12 hours.

6. Public Enquiry Offices

6.1 It is recognised that some members of the public prefer to speak to the police face-to-face rather than using digital methods. Over the past five years, the Commissioner has supported the opening, or re-opening, of 17 Public Enquiry Offices (PEOs) across Devon and Cornwall which allow the public to speak to a member of police staff in person.

6.2 This year, PEOs have opened in **Liskeard, Ivybridge, Tavistock and Camborne**, taking total PEOs across the force area to 26. PEOs are a vital part of Devon and Cornwall Police's contact service and allow individuals to report

⁹ [Contact us | Devon & Cornwall Police](#)

crimes and incidents, get advice, or ask a question to their local policing team. Between January and June 2025, approximately 60,076 people visited a PEO in Devon and Cornwall.

6.3 Not only do PEOs provide ease of contact for the public, but they provide another method for reports and intelligence to be submitted to police. During June and July 2025, 9.0% of intelligence submissions were made through staff working in Public Enquiry Offices across Devon and Cornwall, demonstrating the value and increased confidence that can be provided by face-to-face contact with police.

6.4 The Commissioner remains committed to opening PEOs and continues to explore opportunities to do so.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Over the past 12 months, Devon and Cornwall Police have made several improvements to their contact services which have resulted in tangible benefits to the public. This includes a reduction in 999 and 101 wait times, reduced abandonment of 101 calls, and the re-opening of PEOs.

7.2 Work remains ongoing in several areas to ensure continued improvement, including the introduction of surveying to understand why callers abandon their calls, and exploration of other technologies, including artificial intelligence and automation.

7.3 The Commissioner is therefore assured that improved service delivery has been achieved and will continue to monitor ongoing performance as part of her delivery of the Police and Crime Plan 2025-29.

Contact for further information

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