

From: Matthew Scott, Kent Police and Crime Commissioner
To: Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel
Subject: 999 and 101 service - Update
Date: 14 November 2018



Introduction:

1. It is vitally important that the public are able to contact Kent Police – whether that be in an emergency, to report a crime/anti-social behaviour, to raise safeguarding concerns or to provide information that may assist in the prevention and detection of offences.
2. That is why, within the ‘[Safer in Kent](#)’ Plan, one of the priorities the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) has set the Chief Constable is to ‘Deliver an efficient and accessible service’.
3. Further to a report submitted to the 25 April 2018 Panel meeting, this paper provides an update on emergency (999) and non-emergency (101) call handling performance within the Force Control Room (FCR).

Call volume and answering times:

4. The previous paper reported that for the period April 2017 to March 2018, the average answering time for emergency (999) calls was 13 seconds and for non-emergency (101) calls was 3 minutes. In addition, it highlighted that at times of peak demand, the FCR was experiencing challenges; if a high proportion of call takers were dealing with emergency calls, which by definition must take precedence, this had a negative impact on how quickly non-emergency calls were answered.
5. The table below shows monthly call data since April 2018, and clearly shows that both emergency and non-emergency call handling have improved significantly, with both:
 - an increase in the percentage of calls answered
 - emergency - from 98.89% in April to 99.60% in September
 - non-emergency - from 78.06% in April to 94.57% in September
 - a decrease in the average answering time:
 - emergency – from 10 secs in April to 8 secs in September
 - non-emergency – from 2 mins 35 secs in April to 1 min 26 secs in September

	Emergency (999) calls				Non-emergency (101) calls			
	Total volume	% answered	Average answering time [mm:ss]	Attrition rate	Total volume	% answered	Average answering time [mm:ss]	Attrition rate
Apr 18	25,701	98.89%	00:10	1.11%	42,540	78.06%	02:35	21.94%
May 18	28,203	99.13%	00:10	0.87%	46,534	78.84%	02:46	21.16%
Jun 18	28,386	99.39%	00:08	0.61%	46,525	89.85%	01:25	10.15%
Jul 18	32,593	99.30%	00:09	0.70%	43,568	92.95%	01:24	7.05%
Aug 18	28,839	99.56%	00:07	0.44%	39,141	95.27%	01:03	4.73%
Sept 18	27,497	99.60%	00:08	0.40%	37,454	94.57%	01:26	5.43%
Oct 18*	13,617	99.57%	00:08	0.43%	17,647	93.90%	01:36	6.10%

* up to 15 October 2018

6. Of course it should be noted that not all calls into the FCR relate to police business or necessitate an incident to be recorded. Information requests, signposting, guidance, advice and message handling equates to between 30-40% of demand every day. All of these calls, whilst not an emergency or requiring police attendance also need to be answered and triaged.

7. There are also spontaneous events that increase call demand and cannot be foreseen (and therefore cannot be planned for) which have a huge impact on call levels such as terrorist attacks, serious multiple vehicle road traffic collisions (RTCs), traffic delays in the channel tunnel or at the ports and any severe weather event – snow, flood, gales or a heatwave. These all have an impact on call demand and always require answering of emergency calls to be prioritised over non-emergency calls.

Changes made to improve performance:

8. Staffing within the FCR varies by hour of the day and day of the week, over the 24 hour period, 365 days of the year. Staff work across a 24/7 shift pattern rotation on a five team basis - one team on Early (0600-1600), Late (1000-Midnight) and Nights (2000-0600), with two teams on rest days at any one time. Whilst set around a core shift pattern of early, late and night shifts, the shifts deliberately have flexible start and end times and are a variety of 8 and 10 hour duration. This ensures that as far as possible, the FCR is able to flex the available resource on a daily basis to achieve the variants in demand by hour of the day and day of the week.
9. As Members will be aware, in addition to cutting the cost of the Office of the PCC and requiring Kent Police to find £9m in cost savings, the PCC also took the decision to increase the 2018/19 policing precept by the maximum allowable amount of £12 (7.6%) for an average Band D property. As well as enabling the Chief Constable to recruit up to an additional 200 police officers, the funding was to boost the number of call handlers answering emergency and non-emergency calls, so people could get help quicker and more information could be provided to Kent Police.
10. An additional 36 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff (Communication Officers and Dispatchers) have now joined the FCR and the full uplifted establishment of 330 FTE has been achieved. In addition, of the funded uplift of 18 FTE Investigation Management Unit (IMU) Investigators, 14 have joined with the remaining 4 scheduled to start on 29 October 2018; this will result in the uplifted establishment of 115.3 FTE being achieved.
11. Service delivery is impacted by staff vacancies and turnover remains high due to a number of factors, including transfers to other opportunities in Force, recruitment to become police officers, taking up external roles and some capability challenges. However, recruitment is planned and forecast to mitigate resource gaps for the remainder of this year and the duration of the available funding in order to maintain the uplifted establishment.
12. In addition to an increase in staff, the following activity has taken place to drive performance improvement:
 - Rapid Improvement Plan – utilised as an initial response, but now managed weekly as a continuous improvement review.
 - Review of 19 Flexible Working contracts; changes requested of staff to their working hours / days to optimise resource availability. This has moved over 200 hours from times of over-staffing to times of peak demand in line with the current demand profile.
 - Introduction of Permanent Part-time Working contracts which are negotiated with each person individually, but include a proportion of hours at times of highest demand (1600–2200hrs daily).
 - Review of duty planning processes and forecasts, creating a far more agile and responsive short term and longer term duty planning process.
 - Extension of Switchboard opening hours and days to provide initial triage of all 101 calls, resolving them at source whenever possible, and ensuring only calls requiring a crime report or an incident log are passed to the FCR.
 - Switchboard actively promoting the use of the online crime and incident reporting option to callers and managing customer expectation of queue times for those who go into the FCR queue.
 - Changes to in-queue messaging and IVR (interactive voice response) to assist customers and prevent attrition when there is a need to speak to a call handler, as opposed to using the online reporting facility.
 - Agile deployment of resources across the operational floor, using radio back up and administrative functions to take calls in order to queue bust at times of peak demand.
 - Productivity analysis per operator to inform supervisors how each individual is contributing to service delivery and enabling bespoke support to be put in place where necessary.
 - Use of Development Officers on each team to support high volume of new staff and to ensure the standard of knowledge and training remains high for existing staff across each team.
 - Quality Assurance posts deployed on the operational floor and aligned to each team to conduct real time quality assurance and feedback to call takers to support and improve the quality of call handling.

Staff morale:

13. Morale within the FCR is good, with recent award ceremonies supported by the High Sheriff and providing positive accolades and personal recognition for staff.
14. Further to the improvement in performance, the Chief Constable recently visited the FCR and commented on 'the development opportunities within the Command and the uplift in morale amongst staff operating in the environment'.
15. From 22-28 October, software company APD Communications launched a week celebrating the extraordinary work of emergency services call handlers and dispatch teams. 'International Control Room Week' is intended to raise awareness of the life-saving and life-changing work of staff in emergency services control rooms across the globe who deal with harrowing and distressing situations on a daily basis. Kent were actively involved in this and staff participated in a range of activities held throughout the week to celebrate the fantastic work they do. One of the days was 'Well-being Wednesday' which focused on the health and well-being of the FCR team.
16. The PCC is also keen to show his appreciation for the critical, and often difficult role that call takers perform on a daily basis. In light of this, he has, and continues to make regular visits to the FCR in order to engage with the Senior Leadership Team, chat with call operators and immerse himself in the environment by listening to calls as they are received. Most recently, as part of a week of Force-wide visits, the PCC visited the FCR and met with staff on Thursday 8 November.

Online services:

17. Online non-urgent crime, incident and RTC reporting was launched in September 2017, and is available via the [Kent Police](#) website.
18. 60-70% of RTCs are now reported online, and in relation to non-urgent crimes and incidents, the level has stabilised at an average of 70-80 reports per day – representing 8-9% of all crimes. This is a slight reduction on the 11% originally seen, but it is believed that this is due to the improvement in 101 performance, and a conscious and informed decision by callers to remain on the phone.
19. To date, 44% of people completing an online survey having submitted a report online confirmed that they had heard the recorded message on 101 and hung up to use the online service. Whilst these numbers are still fairly low, this does confirm the effectiveness of the messaging to achieve true 'channel shift'.
20. The Force is currently revising its marketing, seeking to promote 'click before you dial' to encourage greater use of the online option as the first course of action. This is likely to be aligned to a strapline similar to 'if not 999, then go online'.
21. Following feedback and engagement with the Metropolitan Police, the originally proposed bespoke Twitter solution for the FCR is being reconsidered. As an alternative, Twitter for the FCR utilising the existing Kent Police Twitter account for tweets launched during International Control Room Week supported by Corporate Communications.
22. Unfortunately, Live Chat has been delayed as a result of finalising information security requirements, Standard Operating Procedures and contract sign-off. Field testing on the live system was scheduled for week commencing 22 October 2018, with 6 November as the proposed earliest launch date – deliberately delayed due to the competing priorities of half-term, Halloween and bonfire night.
23. The text messaging service for people who are Deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired continues to be effectively utilised as a contact channel.

Future challenges:

24. The Kent Police transformation program must continue balancing traditional service delivery methods (telephony), the need for which will remain for some years, with digital services that are required to meet the needs of current and future generations.

25. The retention of staff remains an ongoing challenge due to a number of factors, including transfers to other opportunities in Force, recruitment to become police officers, as well as leaving to take up external roles.
26. Implementation of an IT upgrade to the Integrated Communications Control System (ICCS) which allows operators to speak via radio with officers and via telephony and other means to the public, integrating all methods of communication to ensure an effective response. In addition, at some stage in the future a new command and control system will need to be procured and implemented to replace the existing STORM system.
27. Evolving technologies, such as vehicle telematics that call 999 automatically in the event of a collision or if activated by the driver. Faults with such systems have already been experienced by the FCR resulting in continuous calls from a faulty vehicle to the 999 line, effectively preventing other calls getting through. Not only is there a need to be aware of the impact on policing and determine appropriate levels of response, but as such technology expands so does the potential for such faults to significantly impact on service delivery.

Holding to account:

28. One of the principle ways the PCC holds the Chief Constable to account is through the quarterly Performance and Delivery Board.
29. Open to Panel Members and the public, on a non-participating basis, the meeting is chaired by the PCC and papers are submitted by the Force in advance and published [here](#). The Chief Constable is required to attend the meeting in order to present and discuss the papers, and answer questions about delivery of the Safer in Kent Plan and policing generally in the county.
30. At the last three meetings – 7 March, 31 May and 26 September - the Force has provided a comprehensive update on FCR performance within the 'Safer in Kent Plan: Delivery & Performance' paper. Prior to this, updates were also submitted to the September and December 2017 meetings within the 'Force Performance' paper. The Force will continue to submit written updates to future meetings.
31. The Chief Executive attends the Force Performance Management Committee where the Deputy Chief Constable rigorously challenges performance internally. The Chief Finance Officer also has an open invitation to attend the fortnightly Force Resourcing Board which is where key stakeholders maintain an overview of Force and departmental strength and establishment and consider requests for change in line with Force priorities, funding and threat, risk and harm.
32. In addition, the PCC has, and will continue to hold the Chief Constable to account via their weekly briefings. Held in the Office of the PCC, the briefings are based on a rolling agenda that allows for frequent, regular detailed discussions around FCR performance and related matters.
33. Most recently, on 29 October 2018, the PCC received a detailed briefing and update on FCR performance from the Chief Superintendent responsible for Crime and Incident Response.
34. The PCC is pleased with the improvement in emergency and non-emergency call handling performance within the FCR since April 2018, making Kent Police more accessible to the public that it serves. However, there is no room for complacency; as outlined above, the PCC will continue to require regular updates on performance and robustly hold the Chief Constable to account for delivery of a Kent-wide 'accessible service'.