

**To: Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel**

**Subject: Contacting Kent Police**

**Date: 16 July 2025**

### **Background:**

1. Further to reports presented at the February and October 2023 Panel meetings, this paper provides an update on Kent Police's performance in managing public demand within the Force Control Room (FCR).
2. Over the last year, performance in terms of managing 999 emergency and non-emergency 101 calls has been very effective. The time to answer has improved significantly and the number of calls not answered has reduced to low levels. National comparisons also indicate Kent Police is now performing to a high standard.
3. The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) is grateful to Kent Police for its assistance with this paper.

### **Introduction:**

4. The public rightly has an expectation that they will be able to contact Kent Police when they need to in a variety of ways that work for them, whether that be to report an emergency, report a crime, seek advice, offer information, or express an opinion. When they do make contact, they expect to receive a timely and appropriate response.
5. The Force encourages individuals and communities to engage and make contact, with confidence, by making its services accessible, appropriate, easy to use and safe.
6. In addition to handling 999 and 101 calls, it also maintains other methods of contact such as online (including [My Community Voice](#)), and through personal interaction, to ensure it is open to all and can respond to user needs and situations. Communication is key and the Force recognises the importance of adapting, being flexible and developing modes of communication to suit all.

### **Contacting Kent Police:**

7. The routes through which the public can contact Kent Police are as follows:

#### **Emergency**

Call **999** in situations like these:

- there is an immediate danger to life
- someone is using violence or is threatening to be violent
- a road traffic collision where life is at risk, or the road is blocked
- a crime is happening right now, like a house burglary or a theft

*If a caller dials 999 from a mobile and is unable to speak, they should listen to the questions from the operator and respond by coughing or tapping the handset if they can. If prompted, they should press 55 – this lets the operator know it is a genuine emergency and the call will be put through to the police.*

Those with a hearing or speech impairment can use textphone service 18000 or text on 999 if pre-registered with the [emergencySMS service](#).

British Sign Language (BSL) users can call [999 BSL](#) to use a remote BSL interpreter.

On the Relay UK App, tap the 999 button and then confirm to make an emergency call ([further information about the Relay UK App](#)).

### **Non-emergency**

- Call 101
- Online via the website: [www.kent.police.uk](http://www.kent.police.uk) (includes Live Chat function)
- Police station front counter
- Out of hours police station phone

Those with a hearing or speech impairment can use textphone service 18001 101 and follow the on-screen instructions to make an emergency call ([further information about textphone service](#)).

On the Relay UK app, dial 18001 101 to access a relay assistant ([further information about the Relay UK App](#)).

In the near future, Kent Police will begin taking demand via a 101 BSL service through a Sign Live video interpreting link on the website. This will bring the level of BSL service in line with that offered to the deaf community via 999.

8. All contacts are triaged using a risk assessment tool called THRIVE:
  - THRIVE is a mnemonic for Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability and Engagement.
  - It guides call handlers in collecting, analysing and prioritising information and intelligence they receive.
  - It offers flexibility, but also organisational structure and therefore consistency; additionally, it acts as an aide memoire when dealing with time critical incidents.
  - Vulnerability (overt and hidden) is a critical element to ensure victims receive the best service and advice.
  - Every incident created (except for emergency calls where there is an obvious threat) has a clear THRIVE rationale recorded.
  - New information or a change in the incident response results in a new THRIVE assessment.
9. On average, 1,400 records are generated a day with approximately 15% being sent to dispatch for attendance by a police officer. The remaining incidents are processed by the FCR and Investigation Management Unit (IMU).

### **Structure of the FCR:**

10. A Chief Superintendent leads the FCR and the senior leadership team consists of both police officers and police staff.
11. On the operational floor, there are five teams. Positions include:
  - Single skilled contact handlers
  - Single skilled dispatchers
  - Dual-skilled operators (contact handler and dispatcher)
  - Other non-call handling functions
  - Crime Investigators and Administrators
  - Duty Inspectors (also Initial Firearms Commanders)
12. Kent is split into three policing divisions with each having a Team Leader overseeing staff on their dispatch pod. They will deal with all incidents on that division. Allocation to roles is based on skills as opposed to any local geographic knowledge.
13. The FCR consists of both police officers and police staff who work either a 24/7 or CORE hours contract to support demand (CORE hours being 0800-2400hrs time window). Shift scheduling is based on forecasted demand analysis utilising previous years data and known events, along with Erlang A calculations from a Workforce Management System to schedule by skill to demand. The FCR has a designated establishment of 35 additional police officer roles to cover the functions of dispatch and contact.
14. The FCR has in previous years utilised the concept of surge demand, where police officers with the requisite skills were reassigned to take phone calls to ensure service delivery was maintained. This was planned via forecasted demand. Whilst this remains available in theory, it has not been used since August 2024 and requires skills to be refreshed throughout the year. This is a last resort measure. Instead, there is now some flexibility to utilise staff in support departments to provide cover when required.

15. Staff turnover is in a good position having reduced from an average of nine leavers a month in 2023, to four in 2024. Contributing factors to this are likely to include increased staff engagement, shift pattern reviews, pay reviews, workplace site re-location and environment, technology changes and improvements to working practices. Anecdotally, a significant factor is the transformation of performance and associated improvement in job satisfaction, alongside a reduction in the sense of pressure to answer calls and level of dissatisfaction from those who previously may have had to wait for their call to be answered.
16. Whilst precise comparisons are not available, discussions with other forces suggest that the FCR's current retention levels are quite favourable and significantly better than those in the private sector. Although direct comparisons are challenging, call centre attrition rates are generally much higher.
17. On 19 February 2024, the FCR relocated from the Kent Police HQ site in Sutton Road to a newly refurbished facility at Coldharbour. The previous building required significant maintenance and was part of a redevelopment project. The new control room, equipped with modern furniture and technology, is in a more accessible location which has contributed to reduced staff attrition. Additionally, a new telephony and radio system was installed, enhancing call distribution, ring-fencing, and supervisory capabilities. Despite some initial technology related challenges the relocation continues to yield performance benefits.
18. Kent Police has conducted a thorough review of current technology and engaged third-party consultants to develop a comprehensive five-year IT roadmap. Key initiatives include transitioning to a portal-based system, implementing automated messaging alongside a Customer Relationship Manager to enhance understanding of those contacting the police, and utilising AI functionality to carry out tasks such as transcription and summarisation. Additionally, there will be enhanced integration with other agencies through Multi Agency Incident Transfer, transforming telephony contact into digital transfers.

#### **Public demand:**

19. Telephony accounts for 76% of total FCR demand:

Emergency 999 contact	999 call received, logged on the command and control system and passed to a dispatcher when deployment of a patrol is required.
Non-emergency 101 contact	101 call received, logged on the command and control system and again if attendance is required, passed to a dispatcher or scheduled for an agreed date/time. Some incidents can be logged for information or passed over for direct crime recording.
Switchboard	Call received and triaged before directing to correct department or officer/staff member.

20. Digital accounts for 24% of total FCR demand:

Website forms	Online forms are delivered into the FCR email account where they are automatically identified; depending on level of risk, a Digital Supervisor will read them before assigning to digital staff. Lower risk online forms such as Contact Us and Officer Contact forms are dealt with slower time between Live Chats and higher risk demand.
Live Chat	Live chats are dealt with like a 101 call where they are either directed to the correct department/officer or logged on the command and control system. Staff on the digital desk often select three Live chats to take at once before the next operator is tasked with further chats. They also support with overflow telephony demand when required.

#### **Emergency 999 contact:**

21. The table below shows 999 data for the period April to March over the last four years:

	Apr 2021 to Mar 2022	Apr 2022 to Mar 2023	Apr 2023 to Mar 2024	Apr 2024 to Mar 2025
<b>Total received</b>	354,887	382,689	384,460	363,396
<b>Total answered</b>	349,804	377,763	383,132	361,813
<b>% answered</b>	98.57%	98.71%	99.65%	99.56%
<b>Total not answered</b>	5,083	4,926	1,328	1,583
<b>% not answered</b>	1.43%	1.29%	0.35%	0.44%
<b>Average queuing time</b>	16 secs	18 secs	10 secs	3 secs
<b>% answered – under 10 secs</b>	66.74%	68.49%	81.41%	96.59%

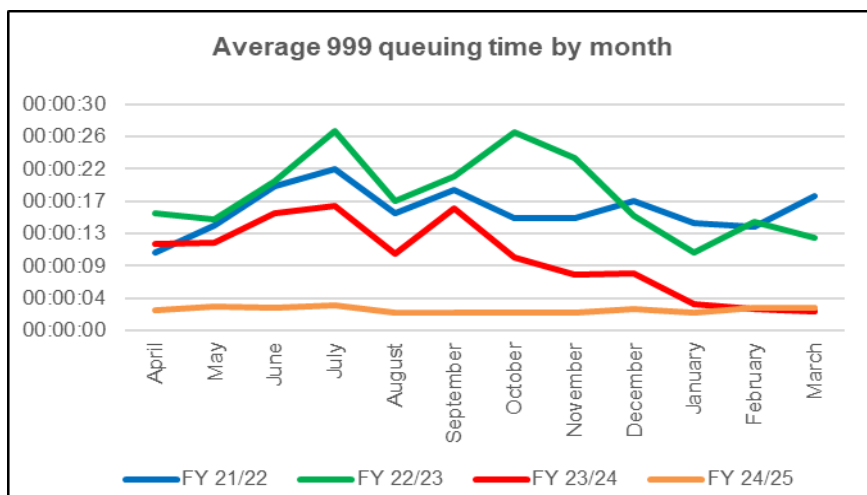
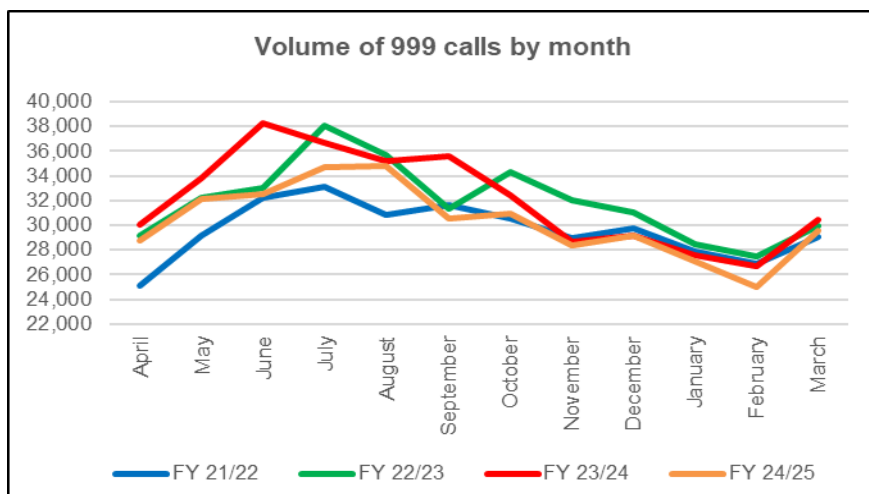
22. April 2024 to March 2025, the number of 999 calls received reduced by 5.5% compared to 2023/24, and 5.0% compared to 2022/23.

23. Emergency 999 calls are managed by BT who will present a call to Kent Police on behalf of the member of the public. If the caller has disconnected, which can be for a number of reasons, mostly accidental or “pocket dials” then BT continue the call and present the details to a contact handler. At this point an incident record is created and attempts are made to recontact.

24. The reduction in 999 volumes can be attributed to three key areas:

- The improvement in 101 answer times has reduced the number of callers moving from 101 to 999.
- Additional work around nuisance and hoax callers, alongside collaboration with community teams to support people suffering with poor mental health.
- Inflated 999 call volumes in the summer of 2023 due to a national android phone issue generating repeat accidental dials.

25. The following graphs show Kent Police’s 999 call volume and average queuing time by month.



26. Nationally, year on year there has been a 1.8% reduction in the volume of 999 calls received by the police. There has been a 16.4% decrease in the average answer time. Using BT figures which include the time to connect to a force, the average for the country in 2024/25 was 8 seconds. In Kent it was just over 5 seconds.

27. Emergency 999 call handling remains the priority for Kent Police recognising the threat, harm and risk that sits within these calls.

28. National rankings are derived from BT data, and the following tables show year-on-year comparisons for 999 performance (national publication of 101 data is still under development):

Average answer time*							
Apr 2021 to Mar 2022		Apr 2022 to Mar 2023		Apr 2023 to Mar 2024		Apr 2024 to Mar 2025	
Kent	National ranking	Kent	National ranking	Kent	National ranking	Kent	National ranking
17.10 secs	27 <sup>th</sup>	18.40 secs	30 <sup>th</sup>	12.87 secs	31 <sup>st</sup>	5.28 secs	2 <sup>nd</sup>

Calls answered in under 10 seconds*							
Apr 2021 to Mar 2022		Apr 2022 to Mar 2023		Apr 2023 to Mar 2024		Apr 2024 to Mar 2025	
Kent	National ranking	Kent	National ranking	Kent	National ranking	Kent	National ranking
67.3%	33 <sup>rd</sup>	69.5%	30 <sup>th</sup>	79.7%	31 <sup>st</sup>	94.3%	2 <sup>nd</sup>

\* Figures differ from Kent Police internal data as they include BT time to handle.

### **Non-emergency 101 contact:**

29. When someone calls 101, the messaging aims to direct them to the most appropriate service, contact method, or relevant agency. This information helps manage expectations, empower and educate service users, and assists Kent Police in prioritising, managing, and responding to demand effectively

30. Current messaging includes guidance on self-service options, such as online crime reporting, to save time for service users. The Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system has been refined to respond to demand, including warnings of higher delays during peak periods. Kent Police have invested in the national online service, Single Online Home (SOH), and a comprehensive digital desk structure. The IVR is the primary method to communicate about SOH due to the lack of national advertising.

31. During significant increases in 999 demand, the Team Manager on shift can authorise time-limited messaging that directs non-emergency calls to digital options where possible. This supports the Force's strategic aim of protecting the ability to answer emergency 999 calls while providing an effective service to the public. The IVR is regularly reviewed, including best practice benchmarking and comparisons to other forces.

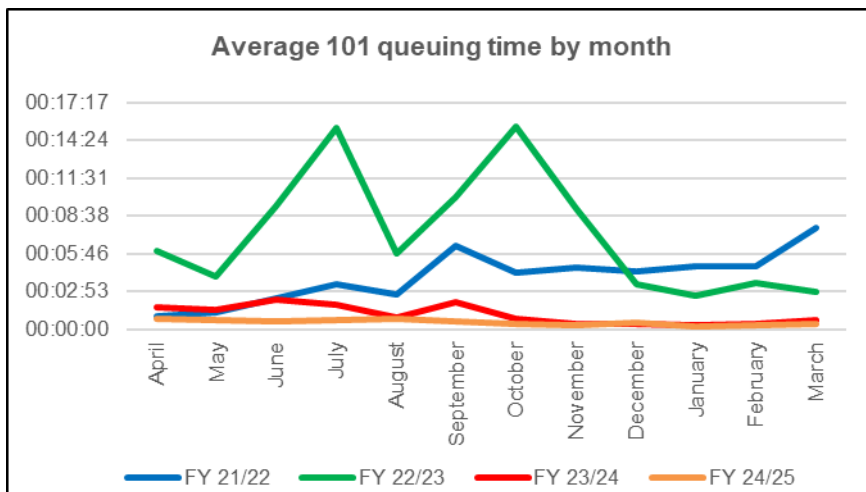
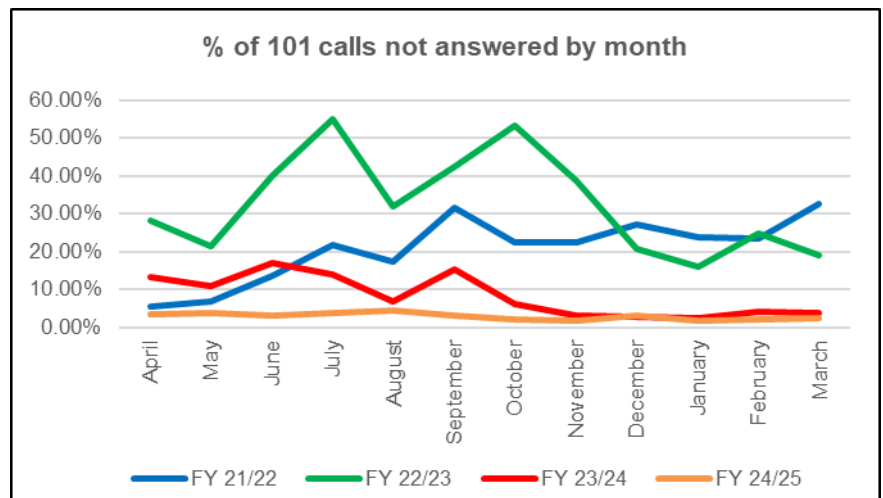
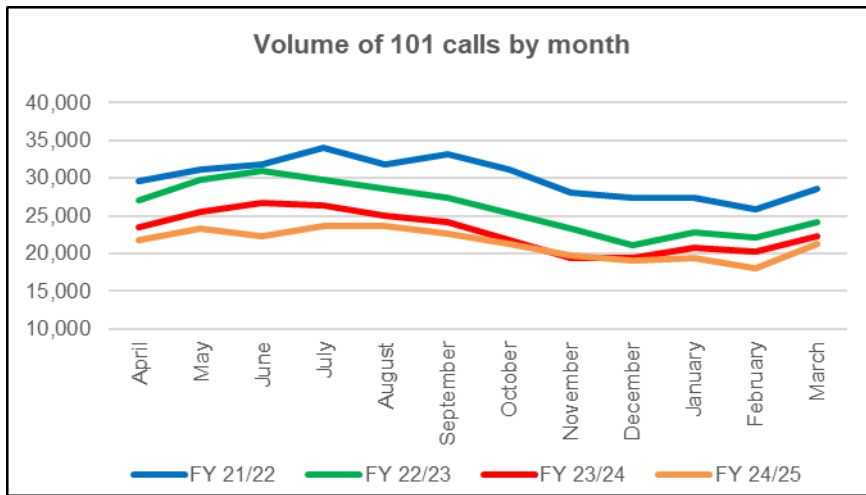
32. The table below shows 101 performance for the period April to March over the last four years:

	Apr 2021 to Mar 2022	Apr 2022 to Mar 2023	Apr 2023 to Mar 2024	Apr 2024 to Mar 2025
<b>Total received</b>	360,181	312,321	275,065	255,824
<b>Total answered</b>	286,159	208,034	250,996	248,284
<b>% answered</b>	79.45%	66.61%	91.25%	97.05%
<b>Total not answered</b>	74,022	104,287	24,069	7,540
<b>% not answered</b>	20.55%	33.39%	8.75%	2.95%
<b>Average queuing time</b>	4 mins	7 mins 18 secs	1 min 6 secs	31 secs

33. April 2024 to March 2025, the number of 101 calls received reduced by 7.0% compared to 2023/24, 18.1% compared to 2022/23, and 29.0% compared to 2021/22.

34. Analysis has shown that represented demand, when someone calls 101 but is unable to get through on the first occasion and then rings again or in some cases multiple times, has reduced significantly. The move to digital also accounts for a significant proportion of the reduction.

35. The following graphs show Kent Police's 101 call volume, percentage not answered and average queuing time by month over the last four years.



### **Digital contact:**

36. Overall, digital demand into the FCR has remained stable for the last 3 years. This is positive as it offers an enhanced service to the public given their ability to select and self-serve via a channel of their choice 24 hours a day, providing an effective and customer focused service.

	Apr 2021 to Mar 2022	Apr 2022 to Mar 2023	Apr 2023 to Mar 2024	Apr 2024 to Mar 2025
Online Crime Reports	39,527	48,278	47,377	48,876
Live Chats	43,744	70,523	66,421	59,458
Other Digital Contact*	16,591	133,176	136,977	146,505
<b>Total digital contacts</b>	<b>99,862</b>	<b>252,427</b>	<b>250,775</b>	<b>254,839</b>

\* 'Contact Us' forms / Emails / Other SOH Options

### **Holding to account:**

37. One of the principal ways the PCC holds the Chief Constable to account is through the quarterly Performance and Delivery Board.
38. 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 Police and Crime Plan '[Cut Crime, Support Victims, Build Trust](#)', as well as policing generally in the county.
39. Published on 1 April 2025, the Plan is underpinned by a Performance and Delivery Framework that is still in development. The framework includes national data and comparative force level data (where available), and both current and historical trend data. It will enable the Office of the PCC to monitor delivery against the key priorities and also form the basis of the papers the Force submits to the Performance and Delivery Board.
40. Other ways the PCC holds the Chief Constable to account for the service delivered by Kent Police include regular one-to-one meetings and bespoke briefings.
41. In relation to the FCR, the PCC also regularly visits and meets new starters as part of their induction. Not only does this enable him to observe activity and listen to calls from the public, but also to speak with the Senior Leadership Team and most importantly the officers and staff.
42. The PCC does not under-estimate the challenges faced by the FCR in terms of managing public demand. However, he is very pleased with performance and reassured that its ongoing strategic transformation will enable Kent Police to continue providing a first class service to the communities of Kent.
43. The PCC would like to thank the officers and staff who work in the FCR for their hard work and resilience. The level and nature of the demand, as well as the often challenging and difficult decisions made every day in terms of managing risk, should never be underestimated.

### **Recommendation:**

44. The Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel is asked to note this report.