

CONTACTING THE POLICE AND CALL HANDLING

INTRODUCTION

1. This report seeks to inform Members of the Consultation and Partnership Committee about call handling and contacting the police. It sets out Humberside Police is responding to concerns expressed by members of the public and Members of the Police Authority.

INFORMATION

Call Handling Performance

2005/6 figures for Call Answering

2. The Force has achieved answering 85.6% of 999 calls within 10 seconds, against a target of 90%. The non-emergency target is for 90% of calls within 30 seconds, the Force achievement was 63.9%.
3. Whilst these figures still fall short of the required targets, it should be noted that performance for the last 3 months of the year indicates a significant improvement on the yearly total as a result of improvements to Call Handling made since the start of 2005/6. This is demonstrated by the figures for January to March 2006 with 91.2% of emergency calls being answered within 10 seconds and 70.9 % of non emergency calls within the required time. The reasons for this improvement are detailed in paragraph 8.

2005/6 figures for Call Waiting times

4. The 'average' time it takes to answer the telephone is also measured at the Command Centres, and a guide to performance can also be gained by analysing the average 'waiting' time.
5. In July 2005, the average waiting time to answer a 999 call was 11 seconds, in August it was 9 seconds. The monthly figures indicate a month by month improvement, so that by the start of 2006, the waiting time was down to just 4 seconds.
6. The chart shown on the next page includes the figures for the non emergency number, which have also improved significantly throughout the course of the year. To summarise, calls are being answered more quickly, and waiting times for the average caller have been reduced by a significant margin:

	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar		Average
999	00:00:11	00:00:09	00:00:08	00:00:06	00:00:05	00:00:05	00:00:04	00:00:05	00:00:04		00:00:06
Non-Emergency	00:02:15	00:02:04	00:01:29	00:01:21	00:00:43	00:00:46	00:00:35	00:00:44	00:00:38		00:01:11

Reasons for improvement

7. The improvements are as a result of:
 - Focus on performance through performance challenge meetings and the publication of monthly figures;
 - Improvements to staffing levels through increased recruitment and training;
 - Abstractions due to sickness being minimised through increased supervisory intervention and the pro-active involvement of Occupational Health and Personnel and Support officers. In September - October 2005, the average sickness ratio was 12% of all staff; this has now been reduced to a total of 5.38%. This figure is representative of a steady improvement that has been demonstrated over several months.

Quality

8. The National Call Handling Standards have set out proposals to measure not only how quickly telephone calls are answered, but also the quality of how the call is handled. Humberside Police has already invested in staff working in the telecommunications environments (Switchboard, Command Centres, CSCC and Divisional Incident Management Units), with the necessary training to equip them to deliver a consistent professional quality service to customers. This quality is measured by supervisors who complete a set number of quality checks per month, which include customer ring backs. Results for 2005/6 show that 92.68% of customers are either satisfied or very satisfied by the level of service they receive at this first point of contact. This should be seen as a measure of our success in this area.

Demand Management

9. Improved demand management has been achieved through the introduction of Divisional Incident Management Units (IMUs) across the Force, following the successful pilot at A Division in September - October 2005. This has allowed the Force to deal with the large number of calls for service it receives on a daily basis in a much more efficient way.
10. One of the significant measures of this success is the number of incident logs that are now outstanding for the Force. An incident log is created every time a member of the public reports an occurrence that requires some sort of police

response. The Force deals with approximately 800-900 incidents on an 'average' day.

11. As a typical example of where the Force was on 26 September 2005, there were 419 live incident logs on the 7 radio dispatch channels in the Command Centres, and another 195 on Divisional terminals - a total of 614 'live' logs. There are now on average only 200 live incident logs held on the Force terminals, 82 of which are held on the radio dispatch channels, with the remainder held at the IMUs. As the figures show, this demonstrates a remarkable turn-around in the way in which the Force is able to respond to incidents and calls for service.
12. This has been achieved due to the new policy to 'screen' all non-priority incidents at the initial point of contact at the IMU (by a police Sergeant), and decide on the most appropriate response. This does not always mean the deployment of a police officer. Many calls are now resolved over the telephone by experienced officers making ring backs, many others are dealt with by means of a slow time appointment, which reduces unnecessary repeat visits to members of the public, and sets a reasonable and achievable expectation at the outset to the member of the public as to when their call for service will be resolved. The Force is moving towards meeting its target of dealing with 'Today's logs Today'.
13. The pilot also introduced a concept known as the Public Service Desks, whose primary role is to act as a local contact for members of the public who contact the police with routine enquiries. The use of an e-mail system to replace that of telephony was introduced, and this has had a remarkable impact on the calls for service to the IMUs and an impressive success rate in answering enquiries quickly and efficiently. This change alone has reduced calls for service to the switchboard by several thousand per month, due to the fact that members of the public do not as frequently have to ring back on multiple occasions to get a response to a routine query.

RECOMMENDATION

14. It is recommended that Members of the Consultation and Partnership Committee note the contents of this report.

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