



To:	The Police & Crime Panel for Sussex
From:	The Police & Crime Commissioner for Sussex
Subject:	Sussex Police Contact Management Arrangements Report
Date:	27 June 2014
Recommendations:	That the Police and Crime Panel note and comment on the content of the report

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out the contact management arrangements and performance of the Communications Department within Sussex Police.
- 1.2 The report also considers the impact that introducing a new system has had on performance, remedial action implemented by the Force and future developments, including a restructure towards a single site Communications Department.

2.0 Contact Management Arrangements and Performance

- 2.1 The Communications Department within Sussex Police is responsible for all contact management arrangements. This includes all contact through the emergency (999) and non-emergency (101) telephone numbers to the Police Contact Centre.
- 2.2 Sussex Police received 221,141 calls to the 999 number across the performance plan year 2013/2014. 96% of these calls were answered within 10 seconds, with an average wait time of 4 seconds.
- 2.3 Sussex Police received 753,535 calls to the non-emergency number across the performance plan year 2013/2014. 96% of these calls were answered initially within 30 seconds by the switchboard team to triage and assess priority.
- 2.4 563,297 of these calls required further work and were subsequently transferred to the main contact centre. Of those calls transferred, 57% were answered within 60 seconds, with an average wait time of 2 minutes and 15 seconds.
- 2.5 However, it should be emphasised that the 57% of calls answered within 60 seconds was a reduction of 23% compared to the previous performance plan year. This decline in performance was identified by the Commissioner and was attributed to the introduction of Niche, a new crime management system, by the Chief Constable.
- 2.6 In addition, it is also worth emphasising that Sussex Police have historically received good satisfaction for both 999 and 101 calls. Feedback for the performance plan year 2013/2014 indicated that 97% of the 408 people surveyed were satisfied with the service that they received from the person they spoke to in the Police Contact Centre.

3.0 Introduction of Niche

- 3.1 Sussex Police introduced Niche, in May 2013 which replaced four internally used systems (crime reporting, intelligence, custody and case preparation systems).

- 3.2 Niche will significantly improve the quality of service that Sussex Police are able to deliver. However, in the short-term, the introduction of Niche has had a detrimental impact on the average call handling times for non-emergency calls.
- 3.3 In particular, the number of calls answered within 60 seconds reduced to 57% across 2013/2014, compared to 74% in the performance plan year 2012/2013.
- 3.4 This was also highlighted as an area of concern by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary.
- 3.5 Sussex Police were the 16th force to introduce Niche nationally and adapted to the change quicker than other forces have done previously. However, the Force acknowledge that this has led to longer delays in answering calls and are working hard to reverse this trend.

4.0 Remedial Action

- 4.1 The Commissioner has privately and publically challenged the Chief Constable regarding the non-emergency call handling performance. In particular, the Commissioner has held the Chief Constable to account at a number of her monthly Performance & Accountability Meetings.
- 4.2 Consequently, this was raised as a significant risk to the Command Team within Sussex Police and was monitored on a weekly basis. The Force has taken a number of steps to reduce call handling times back to expected levels, including the following:
 - Training – All staff in the Police Contact Centre were provided with additional training to assist them in becoming confident in the use of the new system.
 - Recruitment – Sussex Police recruited 30 contact handlers who joined the Force in intakes across March, April and May. A further intake of 30 contact handlers is also planned across June, August and September. The Force is also in the process of recruiting 10 controllers.
 - Process Work – There are several ongoing workstreams within Sussex Police looking at reducing call handling times, duplication and streamlining existing processes.
 - Channel Shift – Sussex Police acknowledge that more people now want the option to make reports on-line which provides users with greater control over when they contact the Force and removes waiting times. The Force will continue to facilitate this channel shift.
- 4.3 The Commissioner will continue to hold the Chief Constable to account for delivering an improvement in this particular area of performance ahead of the planned move towards a single site Communications Department later in the year.

5.0 Single Site Communications Department

- 5.1 The Communications Department is in the process of restructuring and will move from three individual sites to a single site at Sussex Police Headquarters, Lewes which is anticipated to save £1.8 million per annum. This will include a reduction of 37 posts (circa 10%) from the establishment, which, alongside other savings, will reduce total costs by circa 20%.

- 5.2 The single site Communications Department was due to go live on the 1 April 2014. However, due to a delay in the delivery of the required Information Technology, this has now been delayed until 1 September 2014.
- 5.3 These delays are having a significant impact on call handling performance because Sussex Police are already at the required reduced staffing levels for the single site but will remain in three sites over the summer. To mitigate the impact of this the Force has already moved some emergency call handlers, contact handlers and controllers to Lewes, ahead of September.
- 5.4 As well as moving to a single site, Sussex Police will take the opportunity to upgrade some of their call handling applications, including the introduction of queue-buster technology.

6.0 Future Developments

- 6.1 It is essential that Sussex Police maintain their 999 call handling performance and further investment in modern technology will ensure that non-emergency calls are managed in a smarter way to reduce call waiting times.
- 6.2 Sussex Police will be working closely with Surrey Police to align the contact management arrangements between both forces. Further work with the wider Sussex and Surrey emergency services, including the Fire and Rescue and Ambulance services, is also planned.
- 6.3 The Commissioner will continue to monitor this area of Sussex Police performance throughout the summer and the transition to a single site Communications Department.

Recommended – that the Police & Crime Panel note and comment on the content of the Report.

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Office of Police & Crime Commissioner for Sussex