

Meeting	Policing Performance Committee
Date	1 September 2021
Location	Video Conference
Title of Paper	Modernised Contact and Engagement Strategy and 101 Call Handling Update
Presented By	ACC John Hawkins, Local Policing North
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached	No

PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to provide the Policing Performance Committee with an update in relation to the Modernised Contact and Engagement Strategy and 101 Call Handling.

Members are invited to discuss the contents of this paper.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Public contact and engagement with Police Scotland is mainly delivered through its Contact, Command and Control (C3) Division. This Division has evolved through the integration of legacy police control rooms and service centres, establishing a capability to manage and coordinate public contact at a national level for the first time.
- 1.2 All calls or contacts from the public, pass through the four Police Scotland Service Centres (PSSC) where Service Advisers engage with the public to identify the most appropriate police response.
- 1.3 Following C3 Division integration, work commenced on developing the Contact Assessment Model (CAM), to deliver much greater flexibility and choice for the public in how they engage with Police Scotland and receive policing services.
- 1.3 CAM was a marked change in practice and culture for Police Scotland, moving away from defining the police response to calls from the public based on the call or incident type, to one based on individual assessments of Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigative opportunity, Vulnerability and Engagement (THRIVE).
- 1.4 In addition, CAM established a number of options in the way the public could receive policing services other than officers attending at the time. These ranged from remote engagement and resolution, to local policing appointments defining when local officers would attend, or direct crime recording.
- 1.5 CAM was rolled out to all policing divisions in 2019/2020, with a significant programme of training and engagement for Police Scotland personnel, as well as national engagement campaigns with the public and partners. This roll out reported to the [SPA CAM oversight Group](#).
- 1.6 Following extensive engagement and research, Police Scotland published its [Public Contact and Engagement Strategy](#) in 2020. This strategy aspires to develop multi-channel contact and engagement, establishing the options the public expect and need, supported by flexible and relevant policing services.
- 1.7 The Modernised Contact and Engagement (MCE) Programme was established in June 2021 to deliver the change necessary to achieve the aims of this strategy.

- 1.8 This Programme sets out to maximise the impact of enabling communication technologies, for example, providing solutions for public contact through social media, video image transfer or direct data input. This will increase the options available to the public to better enable the way Police Scotland responds based on vulnerability and need.
- 1.9 At this time, the majority of contacts from the public are limited to telephony, through the 101/999 service, and to a much lesser extent, email through the '[Contactus](#)' function on the website.
- 1.10 With all public contacts passing through the PSSC, Police Scotland is presently receiving over 3.2 million contacts per year, increasing on average about 6% annually. This level of contact is presently resulting in 1.5-1.7 million police incidents per year.
- 1.11 There are two major factors currently impacting Police Scotland and its ability to manage this increasing level of public contact and demand:
- The COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on contact and engagement;
 - A reliance on telephony as the principal means of public contact.
- 1.12 The following section will examine these factors in greater detail and their impact on call handling performance and outline the steps being taken at this time to mitigate the impacts, as well as longer term plans to improve for the future.

2. FURTHER DETAIL ON THE REPORT TOPIC

The Contact Assessment Model

- 2.1 Prior to introduction of the Contact Assessment Model (CAM), service advisers' primary focus was identifying the type or nature of each call, initiating a predefined police response once confirmed. This meant that engagement at the first point of contact was brief, with service advisers quickly moving onto the next caller after limited engagement.
- 2.2 CAM is based on more detailed engagement at first contact, including a THRIVE assessment, to better understand the needs and

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vulnerabilities of the caller, before identifying the most appropriate response or resolution.

- 2.3 From the initial design and planning, it was recognised that implementing CAM would result in extending call handling times for Police Scotland, with service advisers taking time to assess the individual circumstances of each caller. However, it was assessed that service improvement and the early identification of vulnerability would outweigh any delays created.
- 2.4 The rollout of CAM commenced in June 2019 as a test of change, followed by a national rollout thereafter. All West Divisions adopted CAM by January 2020, followed by Edinburgh and Borders Divisions in March 2020. Correspondingly call handling times rose from that time.
- 2.5 Average 101 call handling time (call duration) for December 2018 prior to CAM was 7 minutes, rising to 7 minutes and 45 seconds in December 2019, with a partial roll out of CAM.

Benefits of the Contact Assessment Model

- 2.6 From the start of its implementation, CAM evidenced significant benefits in service improvement and efficiency. This included the scheduling of appointments at a time suitable to the member of the public and officers available to provide a call back for advice and guidance, at times sign posting members of the public to a more appropriate service.
- 2.7 In line with general contact trends for Police Scotland, contacts from the public increased during the early months of its implementation, June 2019 – March 2020, prior to COVID-19, at 3.2%, but a corresponding increase in police incidents was less at 1.5%.
- 2.8 Service advisers utilised the THRIVE process to support decision making and guide callers to more appropriate services, while the newly established Resolution Teams were able to provide direct advice, resolution and support to callers, without the need to deploy local officers.
- 2.9 During the pandemic, CAM was critical to the police response. It established a national command and control capability based on the assessment of risk from the first point of contact, with the ability to provide alternatives to officers attending where appropriate to control infection risks.

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2.10 The key pandemic related benefits of CAM were:

- Establishing enhanced THRIVE assessments nationally for all callers, to identify risk of infection at the earliest opportunity;
- Establishing a national remote engagement and resolution capability to reduce attendance and risk of infection;
- Facilitating a blended response for different parts of Scotland with differing COVID-19 tiers and infection risks.

2.11 In effect, the challenges of responding to the pandemic would have been significantly harder if it had not been for CAM.

Impact of COVID-19 on Call Handling

2.12 The COVID-19 pandemic and a national Lockdown impacted CAM and call handling directly, from March 2020.

2.13 From the start of the pandemic, it was critical for Police Scotland to establish a single national standard of risk assessment for all public calls as quickly as possible, to identify and minimise infection risks. Accordingly, the rollout of CAM was significantly accelerated, with all other Divisions adopting the model by April 2020. This provided limited opportunity to deliver the planned levels of pre-engagement and communication.

2.14 Furthermore, parts of CAM were adapted and changed to support the policing response. The basic THRIVE assessment process was extended to include questions regarding COVID-19, to identify the level of risk of infection if officers were to attend.

2.15 This extension of THRIVE, in turn extended call handling times further for each caller. The average call handling time increased to 10 minutes and 42 seconds in December 2020.

2.16 A core response to the pandemic was the implementation of two metre social distancing requirements by the Scottish Government. These requirements impacted significantly on the PSSC, with insufficient accommodation space to maintain a full complement of service advisers.

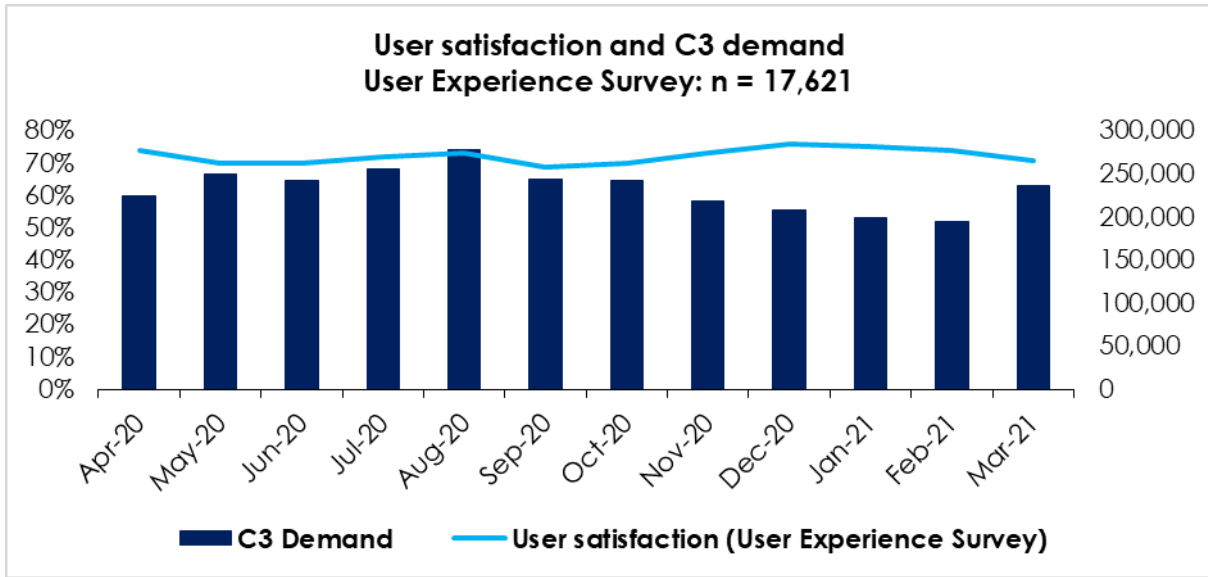
2.17 Furthermore, infections, self-isolation and social distancing requirements particularly impacted C3 Division, because of the nature of service centre and control room environments. These factors combined to reduce the capacity of Police Scotland Service

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Centres to 60% in the summer of 2020, with insufficient accommodation for more service advisers to operate, while maintaining the 2 metre social distance requirement.

- 2.18 While the 999 emergency service was protected and prioritised with no discernible drop in service, the Police Scotland 101 service answering times increased as did the numbers of abandoned calls.
- 2.19 Prior to COVID-19 and CAM, the average 101 call answering time was 28 seconds. This rose to 1 minute 52 seconds at the start of the pandemic; however, as a result of the diminished PSSC capacity the average 101 call answering time is presently at 3 minutes and 25 seconds.
- 2.20 Police Scotland established focused governance around this issue, with strategic oversight provided by a fortnightly Board chaired by an Assistant Chief Constable. The ACC was supported by a tactical group chaired by the C3 Divisional Commander, scrutinising call handling performance on a daily basis.
- 2.21 Call handling capacity was increased by equipping alternative accommodation sites to operate as service centres and development of alternative means of contacting Police Scotland, such as the [COVID-19 reporting form](#) accessed on the Police Scotland website. Since its implementation in December 2020, the Force has received over 31,000 online COVID-19 reports.
- 2.22 Although at this time social distancing requirements have eased, the pandemic has a continued impact on service provision. This has resulted in social distancing requirements in the PSSC being reduced to 1 metre, which will facilitate a longer term return to 100% capacity. However, at this time, the capacity of the PSSC is 81%.
- 2.23 The diminished capacity of the PSSC has led to a delay in recruitment and training of new staff. It will be some time before the full staff compliment is re-established.
- 2.24 Furthermore, with COVID-19 infections continuing, there remains a necessity to maintain the extended THRIVE process, with questioning for every caller about COVID-19, in order to protect the public and police officers. However, it should be noted that public satisfaction for those contacting Police Scotland has remained high throughout the pandemic, although the demand levels and call handling performance have changed during the same period. This is

evidence of the quality of service C3 staff are still providing, despite the challenges they have faced.



Performance Summary of 101/999

2.25 This section presents comparative data from quarter 1 (April – June) in 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22; providing a comparison from pre-pandemic and pre-CAM performance to the current period.

Table 1 – Q1 Call statistics and performance

Call Handling		2019/20	2020/21	Change from Previous Year	2021/22	Change from Previous Year
		Q1	Q1		Q1	
Number of 999 / 101 calls	999 Calls	154,559	141,960	-8.2%	174,531	22.9%
	101 Calls	490,121	522,261	6.6%	491,976	-5.8%
Average Call Answer Time	999 Calls	8 sec	7 sec	-1sec	6 sec	-1sec
	101 Calls	00:00:28	00:01:57	00:01:29	00:03:25	00:01:28
Abandoned calls	999 Calls	1%	1%	=	0%	-1%
	101 Calls	6%	21%	15%	32%	11%
Max Delay in answering	999 Calls	00:03:37	00:05:01	00:01:24	00:05:24	00:00:23
	101 Calls	00:20:56	00:58:47	00:38:00	01:08:30	00:09:43
Number of 999/101 calls that do not result in an incident/crime		197,530	263,329	65,799	280,577	17,248
Percentage of 999/101 calls that do not result in an incident/crime		30.60%	39.6%	9.0%	42.0%	2.4%

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- 2.26 As shown within the data above, 101 call answering times have increased. There are a number of factors affecting this increase however, the increase in call handling time brought about by the introduction of the Contact Assessment Model (CAM) and the impact of COVID-19 are the main contributory factors. The introduction of the CAM forecast an increase in the duration of calls, resulting from the more in-depth initial THRIVE information gathering exercise to ensure the call was resolved in the most appropriate way. Due to the ongoing pandemic, there has been a Health and Safety requirement to gain additional information in relation to COVID-19 risks. It is essential that a call handler establishes if there are any persons at that location who are either COVID-19 positive, shielding, self-isolating, under quarantine restrictions or suffering from any symptoms. This allows the attending officers to wear the appropriate PPE. However, these additional questions have caused a rise in the average call handling time.
- 2.27 The pandemic has also introduced challenges around physical distancing, which has led to a reduced capacity of 81% of our normal operating levels. Like many other employers, staff absence throughout the pandemic has also been considerably higher than normal and recruitment processes and training have had to take place with a 50% reduced capacity. The summer demand model operated within the Service Centre, requires the use of overtime to provide additional cover during peak call demand periods. The reduction of capacity, as well as the reduced staff desire to work overtime during the pandemic, has resulted in a reduced capacity during the periods of peak demand.
- 2.28 Total 101/999 call volumes have remained relatively static during the pandemic, with a 0.3% increase over the past 12 months. It should be noted, that calls from the public fell at the start of the pandemic during the initial national Lockdown, rising quickly after restrictions eased. In addition, the nature of calls changed as the public turned to Police Scotland in the absence of other local public services being available at the time. This caused varied and unpredictable call demand patterns.
- 2.29 Abandoned calls are defined as where the caller has disconnected before speaking to a service adviser. This could be for a number of reasons including: changing to 999, as directed by initial recorded messaging in an emergency; a caller has decided to redial and select another option from the pre-recorded menu; police assistance is no longer required; the caller has opted for online reporting

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through Contactus or the website; or the caller is unwilling to wait longer.

2.30 It is not possible to evidence the reasons for calls being abandoned through follow up engagement, due to the present limitations of Police Scotland systems, whereby no record is kept of telephone numbers of abandoned calls. It should also be noted, that between 60 and 120 seconds an automated message highlights other reporting facilities available, for example, Contactus which could, in part, explain the rise of calls which are abandoned during this period. It should be noted that further breakdown of call data beyond 2 minutes is not available due to system limitations. The introduction of our new telephony platform through Unified Communications and Contact Platform (UCCP) will include a suite of systems which can provide more data reports.

2.31 The following tables profile the number of calls that are abandoned within seconds Q1 2020/21 and 2021/2022

- Table 2 - Abandoned call rates Q1 2020/2021

101 Calls – Q1 2020/2021										
Seconds	0-5	5-10	10-20	20-30	30-40	40-50	50-60	60-90	90-120	>120
Answered	159,214	7,059	9,982	9,804	9,878	9,732	9,758	28,332	25,838	143,107
Abandoned	2,826	1,825	5,827	6,658	4,959	6,640	4,728	16,820	11,589	47,685
% Answered	30	1.35	1.91	1.88	1.89	1.86	1.87	5.42	4.95	27.40

- Table 3 – Abandoned call rates Q1 2021/2022

101 Calls – Q1 2021/2022										
Seconds	0-5	5-10	10-20	20-30	30-40	40-50	50-60	60-90	90-120	>120
Answered	80,852	5,811	7,180	7,279	7,438	7,506	7,599	22,330	21,147	167,106
Abandoned	3,058	2,111	6,628	14,517	8,926	6,977	6,247	20,642	13,957	74,993
% Answered	16	1.18	1.46	1.48	1.51	1.53	1.54	4.54	4.3	33.97

Improving Contact and Engagement

Short/Medium Term

2.32 A Short Life Working Group (SLWG) has been established, chaired by ACC Hawkins, with representation from C3, ICT, People and Development and Corporate Communications, to progress key areas of work in response to current challenges surrounding the increase in 101 call waiting times. The following measures are being progressed:

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- Work is ongoing to explore short, medium and long term solutions, to address a number of the people challenges associated with payment for shift variations, overtime, 'flexible' contracts and 'exigencies of duty'.
- Changes are being made in how Contactus emails are being managed, redirecting the demand away from the PSSC to create service adviser capacity.
- New working practices are being developed to support engagement through other channels of communication such as social media.
- ICT work is ongoing to develop better call triage and coordination, supported by more informative call messaging to the public at the start of each call.
- Unified Communications and Contact Platform (UCCP), will also realise longer term solutions, including an improved website and improved technology, as calls can be answered anywhere across the Police Scotland estate. This will also allow better scrutiny of data and performance, to assist in the management of demand.
- In a recent call review, it was found that over 26% of all calls to Police Scotland over the defined period, are simply seeking advice. Work is commencing on the Police Scotland website to develop the level of advice and guidance available.
- Following the recent Scottish Government update regarding the reduction of COVID-19 restrictions, planning is underway within C3 on how best to introduce a reduction of social distancing. At present there is no date agreed for this reduction as work continues with Health and Safety to ensure the safety of staff members.

Longer Term – Modernised Contact and Engagement

2.33 As mentioned in Section 1 above, in June 2021 Police Scotland established the Modernised Contact and Engagement (MCE) Programme. This is a programme of change projects and work streams, to blend technical enabling technology projects and projects focused on people, practice and process change, to deliver on the aspirations of the Public Contact and Engagement Strategy.

2.34 At this time, it includes the UCCP project to replace the Police Scotland telephony system. This enabling technology, will bring multi-channel communication capabilities to Police Scotland and all

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us to embrace opportunities arising from advances in communication technology in the future.

- 2.35 The UCCP project is nearing submission of its full business case, with a delivery timeline of 2023.
- 2.36 In advance of the delivery of UCCP, initial scoping has commenced to develop the Police Scotland website, to use it as a portal for multi-channel communication, with an interactive reporting and self-service capability.
- 2.37 Another project within the MCE Programme is the Contact, Engagement and Resolution Project (CERP). This is a project designed to build on CAM, to enhance the quality of contact and engagement with the public and streamline the delivery of core services, such as directly recorded crime.
- 2.38 This project also includes the introduction of Mental Health Nurse Practitioners into C3 Division, to support widening access to the Mental Health Pathway for callers in mental distress, to improve the service they receive. The full business case for CERP is anticipated to be completed in the coming month.
- 2.39 The MCE Programme also includes development of a C3 Digitally Enabled Target Operating Model. This work aims to design a model for how contact and engagement will be delivered in the future. It will provide a framework against which all MCE change projects can be prioritised and delivered.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no additional financial implications associated with this report.

4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no additional personnel implications associated with this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications associated with this paper.

6. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are reputational implications associated with this paper.
- 6.2 This is in recognition of the relationship between COVID-19 impacts on call answering times and the level on public trust and confidence.

7. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no social implications associated with this paper.

8. COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 8.1 There are community impact implications associated with this paper.
- 8.2 Service delivery to local communities could be compromised if the performance of 101 continues to be impacted in the longer term.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no equalities implications associated with this report.

10. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no environmental implications associated with this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are invited to discuss the content of this paper.