Performance and Resources Scrutiny Programme 2022

Report to: the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex

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Author on behalf of Chief Officer:	**C/Supt Stuart Hooper**
Date of Approval:	

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Office of the Police, Fire, and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC) with an assessment of Essex Police performance across recent years on public call handling of emergency and non-emergency contact routed through the Contact Management Command.

No decisions are required as a result of this paper.

2.0 Recommendations

This paper is for noting only.

3.0 Executive Summary

The Contact Management Command represents the gateway to policing services, whether that be on a phone, in a police station enquiry office or online; it is how members of the public seek policing services.

Our strategy is to ensure Contact Management Command enables Essex Police to manage all contact in a way that is consistent and that appropriately meets the needs of the individual. Delivering a service that is intelligent, personalised, reassuring, and effective at the earliest point of contact putting the public at the heart of decision-making.

National Principles of Public Contact:

Public Focussed	Effective Channel Management	Prioritisation of Contact
Contact channels must be accessible and meet the policing needs of the public intended to use those channels.	A range of contact channels will be required to meet calls for service in a way that is nationally consistent.	Contact where there is a real and immediate risk to life will be prioritised in all cases.
All contact channels will provide clear information and signposting to self-service wherever possible.	The '999' emergency system will remain the preferred means to contact police in an emergency and misuse of that system should be robustly challenged.	Contact will, where appropriate, be resolved at the earliest point of contact, without deploying officers or staff.
Decisions on call grading and attendance will consider the needs of both the individual and the public as a whole.	There will be a range of non-emergency channels to contact the police but not all contact will be serviced on all channels.	Some contact will not be attended and where appropriate may not be investigated.
Police officers and staff must act in a way which is ethical and protective of the public interest.	Contact with higher risk remains a higher priority for the police service and will be serviced contact.	Strategic decisions on attendance and investigation policies will be informed by the resources available to meet contact.
Contact with individual members of the public may provide wider opportunities for engagement and communication with the public as a whole, in a digitally connected era.	Transactional or lower-risk contact should be primarily self-service.	Vulnerability will be considered when prioritising contact.
		Relationships with partners should support the most suitable response to contact, every time.

This paper has been requested to assess performance of the service provided to the public by Essex Police Force Control Room (FCR) and Resolution Centre (RC) since 2016 to present, highlighting call handling performance and methods available for members of the public to report crime and anti-social behaviour.

It should be noted that due to the replacement of certain IT platforms used within FCR in Summer 2019 some data is only available from this point forwards.

In recent years the volume of 999 emergency call demand has increased. This is a national trend. The volume of non-emergency, telephony-based contact has reduced. This coincides with more online services becoming available.

Summary from FMS 2022

Requests for Service – 999 calls have remained stable in the last two years, with a small decrease of 0.2%. However, the long-term trend is forecasted to increase. This is line with national forecasts.

Calls to FCR 101 and Resolution Centre (Public) 101 have also fallen; this decline has also been experienced nationally. They are forecast to continue to fall, whereas the online crime reporting trend is forecast to increase.

Incident Response – Whilst the volumes of incidents (all types) recorded increased in the 12 months to December 2021, the long-term forecast is that volumes will remain stable.

Emergency graded incidents have increased and are forecast to continue to rise. More emergency incidents, however, are being attended in time.

Priority graded incidents have decreased. However, the number of Priority Incidents attended within an hour has fallen. Furthermore, the proportion of High Harm Priority Incidents attended is below the proportion for all Priority Incidents combined. This is currently a Force concern.

To assist with this concern, 15 Police Sergeants were posted to the Force Control Room as part of the Police Uplift Programme Focussing on High Harm, Concern for Welfare and ASB incidents, supporting LPA Sergeants in the leadership and management of incidents and risk by adopting a proactive, problem-solving approach.

Current Performance:

The graphs below show the current performance in relation to 999 calls, FCR 101 calls and Resolution Centre 101 calls. 999 performance trend is stable over the period Apr 2019-Jun 2022 however performance between Feb '22 to June '22 is below this trend line, comparison with Feb '21 to June '21 shows a decrease in the grade of service achieved.

FCR 101 call performance shows a declining trend and whilst the longer-term trend for Resolution Centre 101 calls is improving, the performance since February 2022 has declined rapidly.

It is argued that, since 2018/19, Essex Police has made improvements in the following areas:

- 999 average answer time
- 999 re-presented/abandoned rate
- 101 average answer time
- 101 abandoned rate
- Contact platforms available to the public
- Public use of online services

4.0   Introduction/Background

Essex Police receives reports of incidents and crimes from members of the public through a variety (and expanding number) of platforms. The primary method of contact from the public remains the 999 emergency, and 101 non-emergency telephony systems.

Emergency 999 Calls

The level of demand placed upon the 999 and 101 system varies depending on the day of the week, time of day, and time of year and at its peak can see over 1200 emergency and over 1000 non-emergency calls in a 24 hour period. Increases in demand could be a result of simply a busy period of the year, a warm summer as an example, or a spike in calls following a particular incident.

All emergency 999 calls should be answered within 10 seconds. The beating the crime plan national target has been set as 10 seconds which includes the BT handling time. Our 'grade of service' is determined as the percentage of calls answered within this time frame. Our current YTD GOS is 82.9% (Aug 2022) against a 90% target.

In the event that a 999 call is not answered within 10 seconds, BT will re-present the call again to Essex Police. No emergency call will ever drop out unless the member of public hangs up.

Non-Emergency 101 Calls to FCR

Non-emergency calls to police control rooms are not subject to a national performance target. The NPCC Contact Management Group have advised against setting a notional target for this non-emergency service. Essex Police recently established an aspiration to answer non-emergency 101 calls within 300 seconds. Our 'grade of service' is the percentage of calls answered within this time frame.

FCR 101 non-emergency calls initially come through to our switchboard who are responsible for answering all general enquiries in the first instance. The performance of our HQ Switchboard is 81.9% of calls this YTD have been answered within 30 seconds. The Switchboard team will transfer the caller to most appropriate option available which can be:

- To an officer or member of staff that they know the name of
- To a public facing department
- To 101 non-emergency response call takers
- To 101 resolution centre call takers

Resolution Centre Non-Emergency Calls

RC non-emergency 101 calls are transferred to the RC from the HQ Switchboard. These calls are from members of public reporting or updating a crime or anti-social behaviour incident that does not require initial police deployment but requires a report to be taken for an investigation to take place in slower time.

Performance Headlines

Over the last 6 years, significant efforts have been placed on in improving the service level offered to the public which can be evidenced in the data shown later in this report.

We now offer more channels for the public to get in contact with Essex Police which has included the introduction of online reporting of incidents through our Single Online Home (SOH) website. The current SOH system was introduced in September 2019. The introduction of "Live Chat" (in May 2020) has enabled a live instant messaging communication between a member of the public and the FCR. This is proving to be more convenient for those who do not want to use the non-emergency phone system. It is also a preferrable platform for people living with certain disabilities such as a neuro-diverse condition.

It must be noted that with the introduction of more channels this does not infer a reduction in telephone traffic, in fact the national contact strategy highlights we are likely to see more contact.

'Soft phone' technology has been introduced to allow 101 calls to be taken at different locations, providing greater flexibility for non-emergency call handling by our workforce.

It is common for 101 call wait times to be sighted or discussed at public engagement meetings and is a frustration of residents who have previously attempted to get in contact with Essex Police. This paper highlights the improvements made to service offered, and the expansion of different methods to make contacting Essex Police easier and more convenient than it has ever been before.

5.0   Current Work and Performance

This section seeks to highlight the improvements in call handling in Essex Police which have been achieved through:

- Better aligning of staff to demand profiles
- Increased scrutiny and improved performance management structure with the use of new performance dashboards for the command
- Improved recruitment processes which are seeing an increased volume of applications
- New training programme and delivery timetable
- New Quality of Service to capture feedback for staff and future development
- Introducing new ways of CPD delivery for the command
- New SMS text messaging platform to inform/update callers
- New SMS text survey for FCR and the RC to help us understand the service we provide and how we can make improvements
- 15 Problem Solving and Service Improvement Sgts into FCR scrutinising Priority 4 incidents and reviewing concern for welfare and high harm incidents
- 'Would you know what to do' recruitment campaign, working in conjunction with Media and Recruitment Teams to fulfil our establishment.
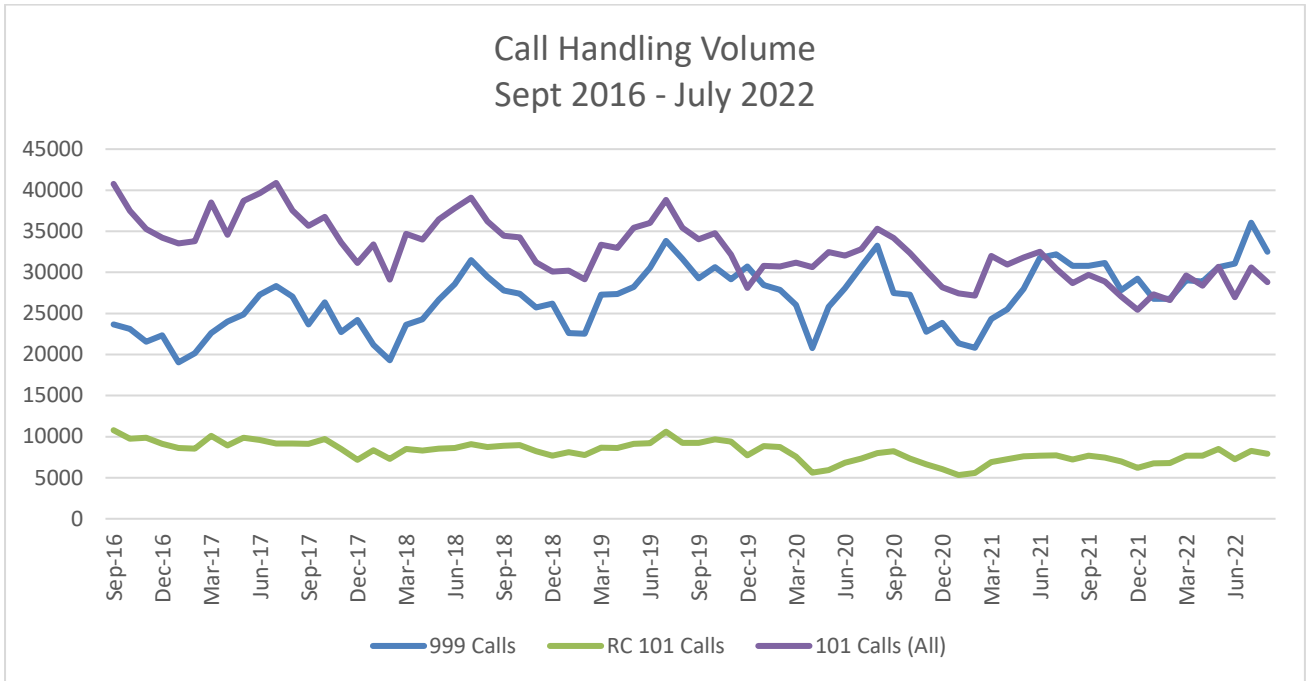
Call Volume

Fig 1 above chart shows the number of calls taken by the Force Control Room and Resolution Centre from September 2016 to June 2022. The seasonal demand through the summer months can be evidenced by the spikes across emergency and non-emergency calls.

The data shows a gradually increasing volume of 999 calls (a national trend) against a gradually declining number of 101 calls over the reporting period. The reduction in telephony based 101 calls occurs while a number of online services have become available. The volume of 999 emergency calls to FCR is now greater than the total of non-emergency calls.

On average about 20% of emergency calls are translated into emergency incidents, this has become a focus for the force to ensure the appropriate use of the 999 system

The below tables show the heat maps of 999 and 101 calls over the 12 month period and the impact of seasonality on both call types:
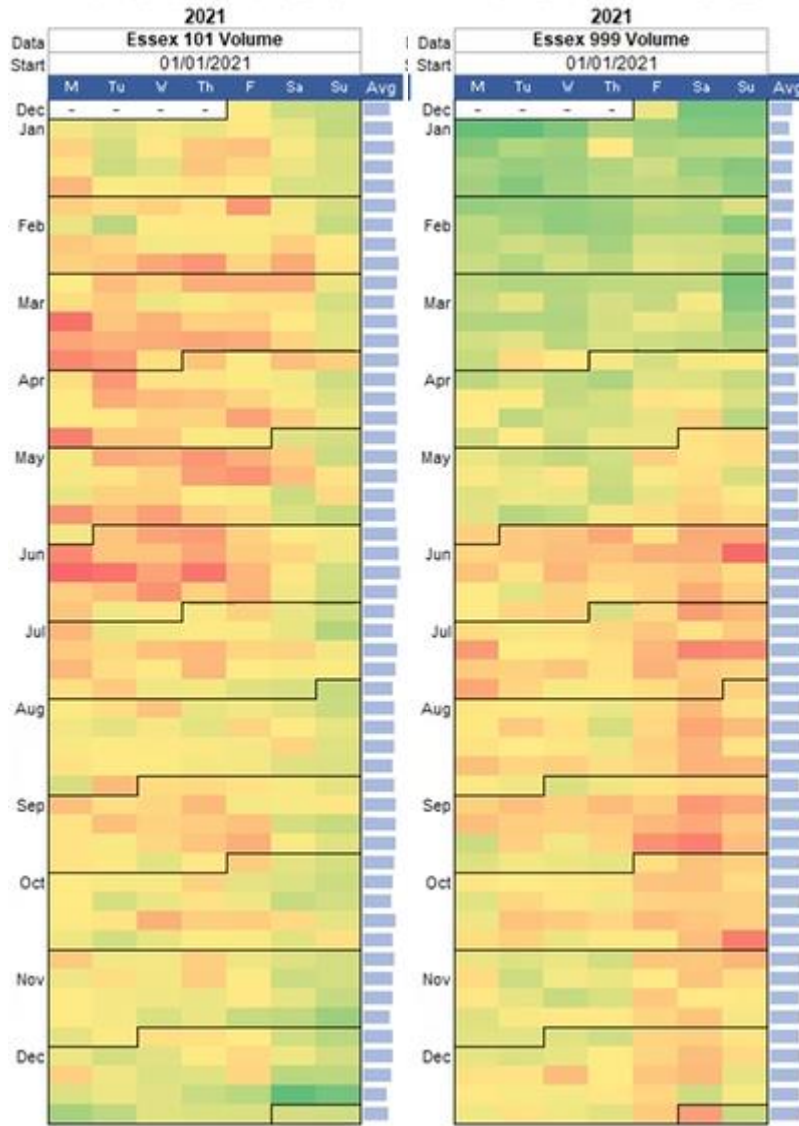
Average Answer Times
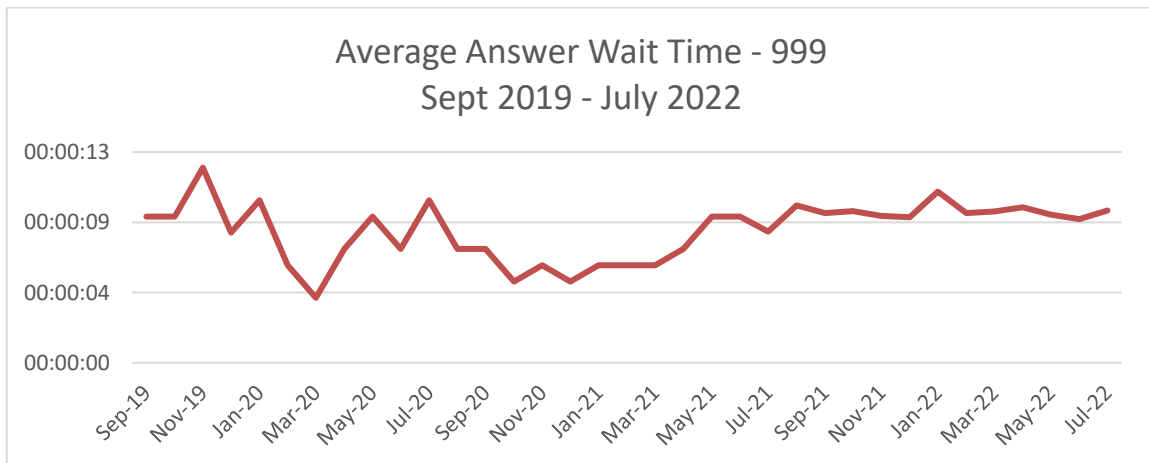(Data available from September 2019 onwards only)

Fig 2 above shows the Essex Police average answer time data between September 2019 – July 2022 for public 999 calls. The data shows on average all calls are answered within the 10 second target. Again, spikes can be seen across the summer months in line with seasonal demand.

The apparent increase in average answer time in June and early July 2020 coincided with an IT fault (now rectified) which meant that 101 calls were prioritised over 999 calls.
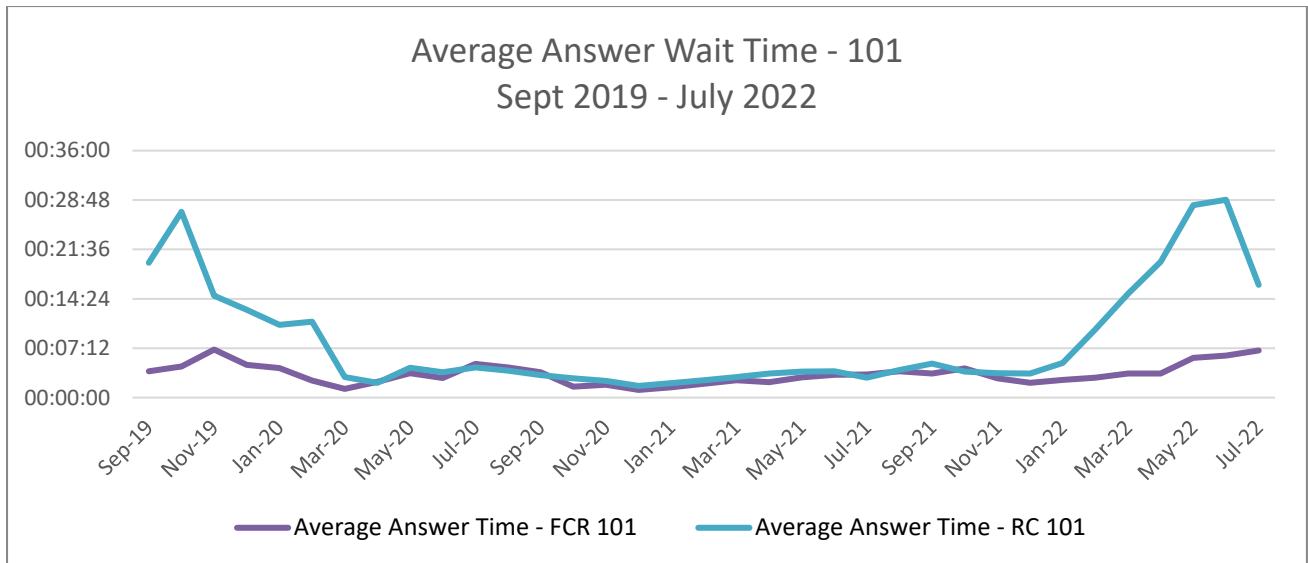

Average Answer Wait Time - 101
Sept 2019 - July 2022

Fig 3 chart above shows the average answer time between September 2019 – July 2022 for non-emergency 101 calls. The chart shows the anticipated peaks in seasonal demand and was further impacted in 2020/2021 by central adjustments to COVID related social restrictions which invariably led to a spike in non-emergency reports relating to breach reporting.

The increase in call time since January 2022 correlated to the management of QA and linking and the drive to reduce victim wait times to allocate and OIC

Abandoned Rates
(Data available from September 2019 onwards only)

The percentage of calls being abandoned by the caller prior to being answered is subject to a lot of internal scrutiny, in particular, the 101 non-emergency system. The time to answer an emergency 999 call is so quick that abandoned calls are extremely rare, and more likely because of a caller changing their mind, or because the nature of the emergency necessitates them to hang up the phone for their safety. In these cases, the number is always called back, and a policy exists directing how Essex Police manages such scenarios.

With regards to the 101 system, callers will abandon their call for a number of reasons:

- Wait time too long, or inconvenient to hang on at that moment in time
- Decided to report via another means (such as online)
- Change mind and will call back later (a recent dip sample revealed 22% callers abandoning will call back within 2 hours)

Whilst we strive to keep our abandoned rate as low as possible by answering calls as quickly as possible, at times of peak demand our emergency calls must always take priority.
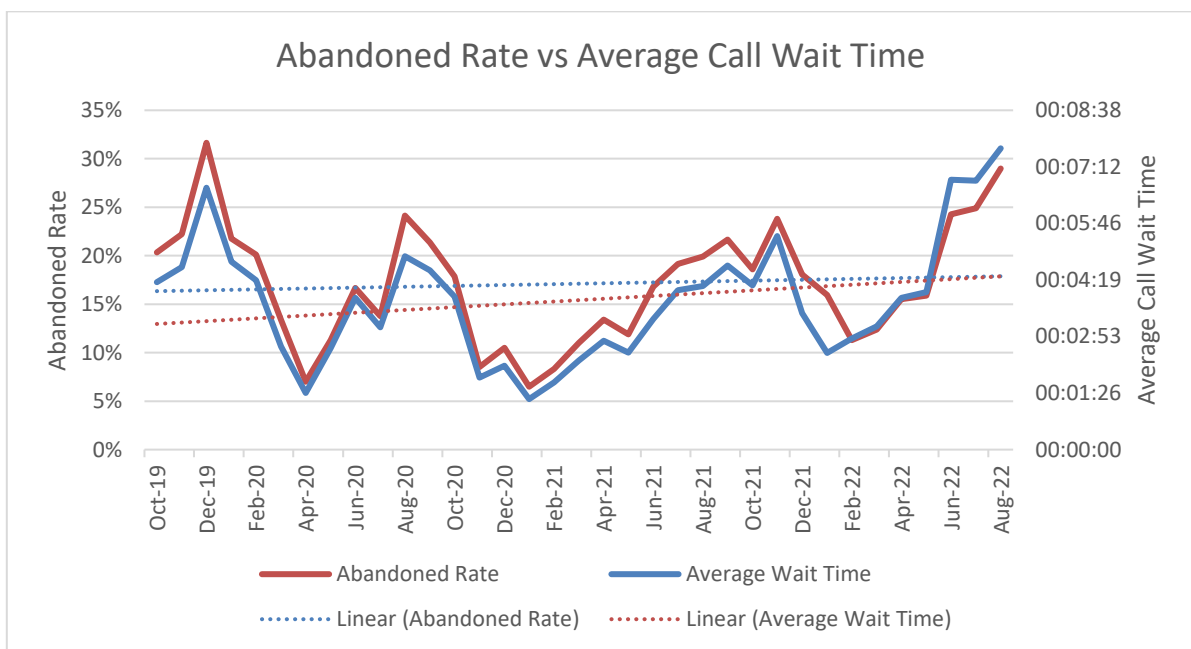

Fig 6 shows the abandoned rate from September 2019 to August 2022. There is a very strong correlation between the call wait time and the abandoned rate. Given a 1 second increase in the wait time, we can expect a 0.05% increase in the abandoned rate, or, the abandoned rate will increase by 1% for every 20 seconds additional wait time (and the same in the opposite direction).
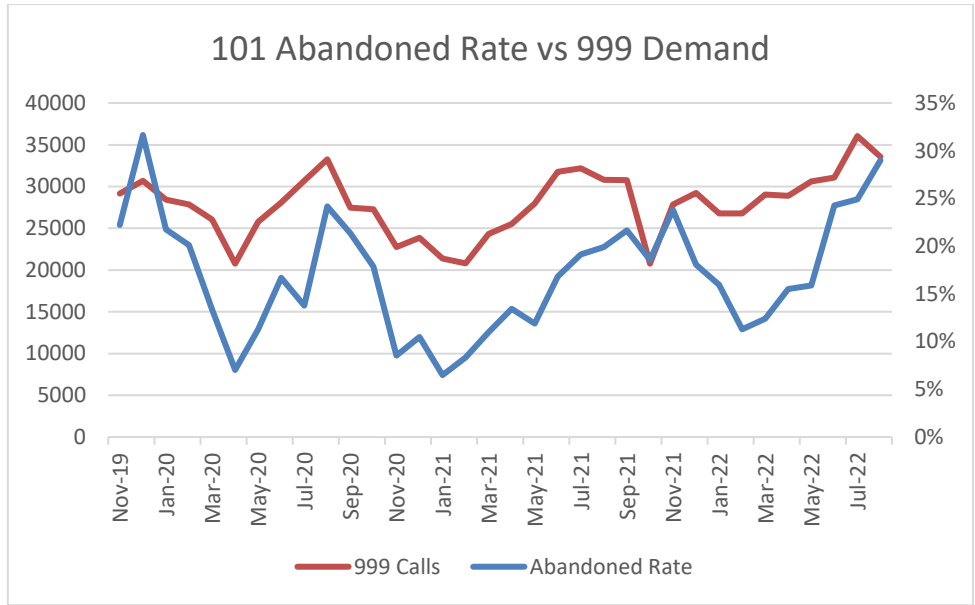
101 Abandoned Rate vs 999 Demand

Fig 7 shows there is also a strong correlation between the 101 abandoned rate and 999 demand, which is expected due to resource allocation/reallocation to prioritise emergency calls. Here, for every 1000 additional 999 calls, we can expect a 1.3% increase in the abandoned rate and the same in the opposite direction.
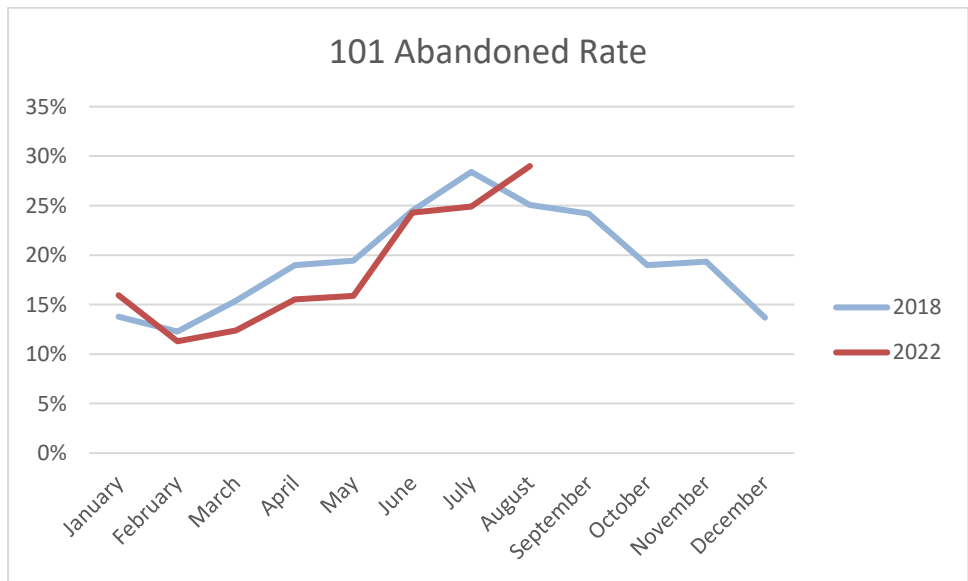
101 Abandoned Rate

Fig 8 shows that our 101 abandoned call rate is lower in 2022 until we start the summer period spike.

Digital Demand /Channel choice

As part of our ambition to make Essex Police as accessible to the public as possible, we have invested in our online provision to open additional avenues of contact for members of the public needing to report a crime or contact us.

Our website (known internally as 'Single online home') launched in September 2019 and makes it easier for crimes to be reported using online forms. This service follows a nationally delivered standard of platform and service presentation for police external internet services.

As demonstrated by Fig 9, the online reporting via our website is on an increasing trajectory.

In May 2020 we launched our 'Live Chat' function, allowing members of the public to have a live instant messaging conversation with a call handler, without having to wait for their 101 call to be answered.

In November 2021, following a national pilot, the implementation of victims reporting domestic violence online was introduced.

Contact Management Command works in conjunction with the Media Department to not only promote these services to the public but to educate the public on which channel may be more suitable for their needs. The following infographics have been produced for the command and cards printed for circulation to the public:
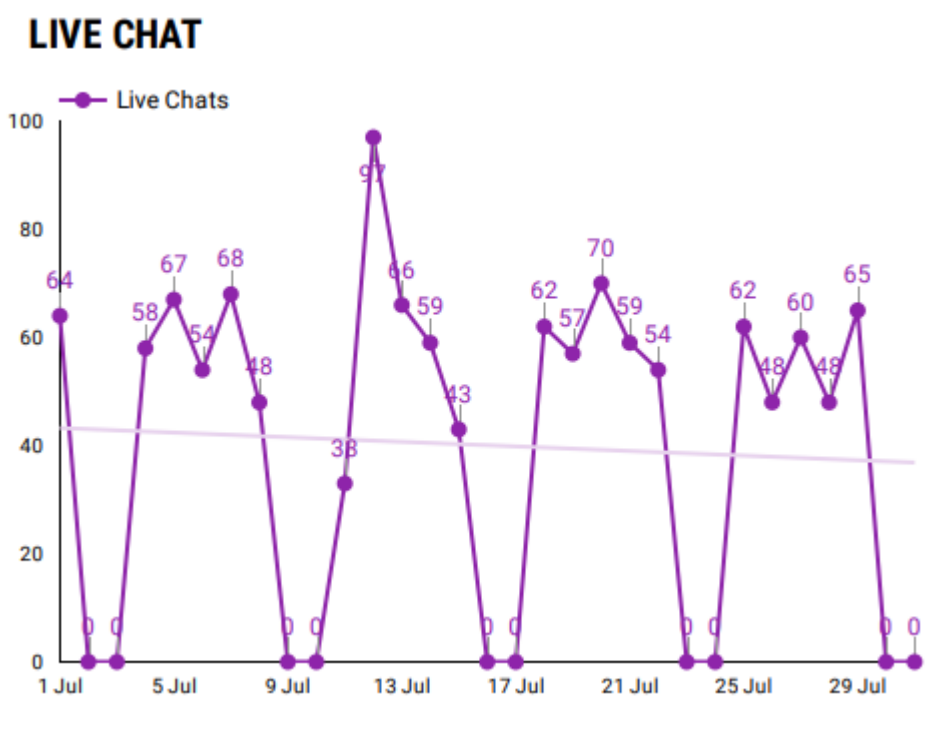
Fig 10 shows the increasing usage of live chat since its implementation, it is likely that an element of our 'abandoned' 101 calls are contact us via this mechanism instead.

We promote our online services, including Live Chat, through our automated IVR message that callers to the 101 service receive at the point of initial contact. We are working with our Media Department to look at further revision of the IVR and the wider promotion of our Live Chat service including encouraging other agencies (for example the ambulance service) to utilise Live Chat to contact our FCR.

The Force has also promoted our online service provision through various media platforms including social media.

Beating Crime Plan

The government's Beating Crime Plan, published in July 2021, aims for a targeted approach towards crime with the focus on three key areas:

- Cutting homicide, serious violence, and neighbourhood crime
- Exposing and ending hidden harms and prosecuting perpetrators
- Building capability and capacity to deal with fraud and online crime

Additionally, the plan seeks to, "Improving the responsiveness of local police to 101 and 999 calls by working with HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services to develop league tables National Police Chiefs' Council for answering calls and ensuring that the public know how responsive their local force is when they call them for help."

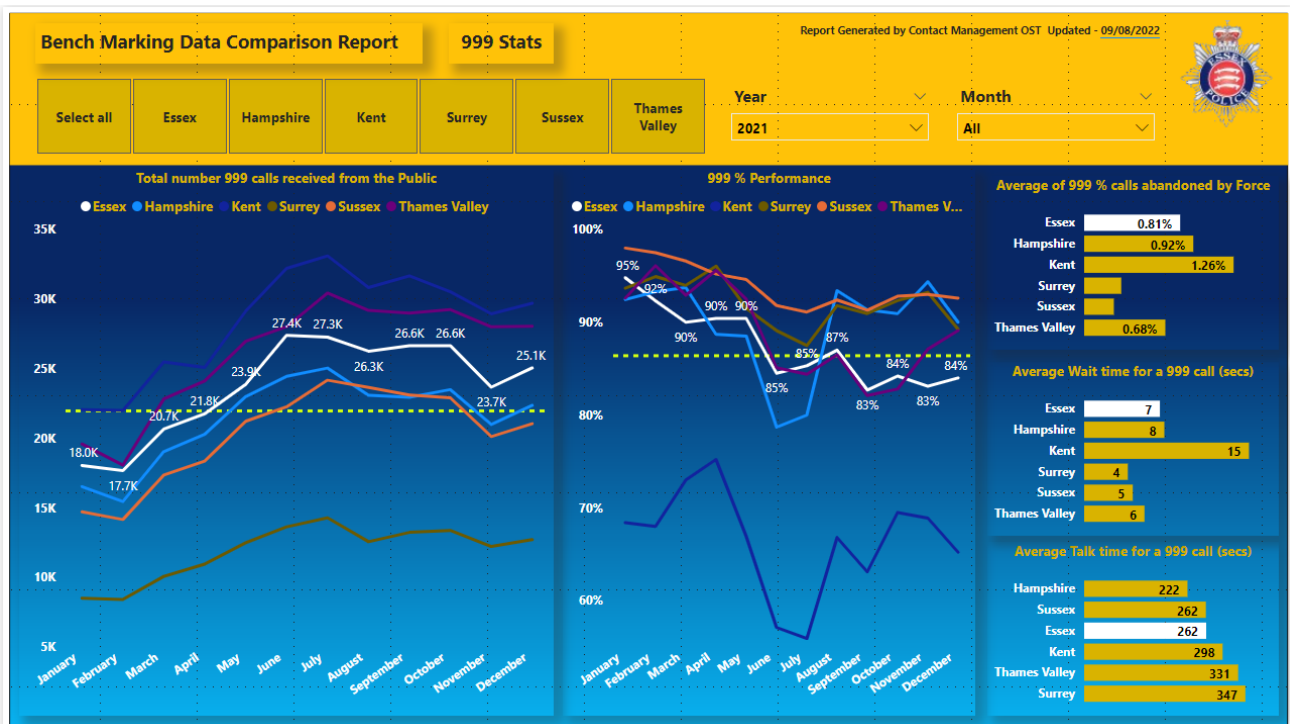**National Benchmarking Comparison for 999 calls**

Fig 11 shows our 999 volume received and performance for 2021 in comparison to 5 other forces.

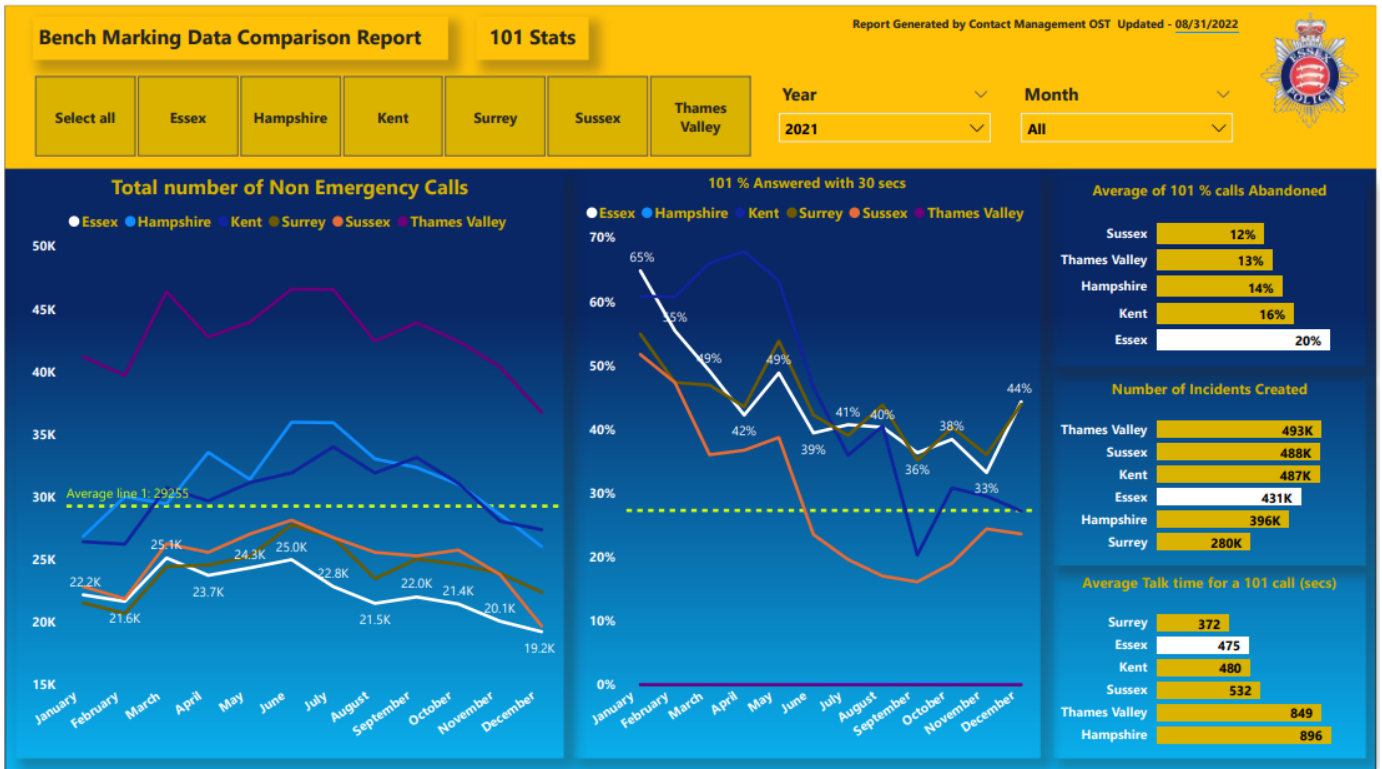## National Benchmarking Comparison for 101 calls

Fig 11 shows our 101 volume received and performance for 2021 in comparison to 5 other forces.

Figure 12 shows Essex Police's national position in comparison to the 44 forces who are measured for the percentage of calls answered within 10 seconds.

Month	Nov 2022	Dec 2022	Jan 2022	Feb 2022	Mar 2022	Apr 2022	May 2022	June 2022
Position	17th/44	17th/44	18th/44	23rd/44	14th/44	17th/44	15th/44	13th/44

Figure 12 - National Position for % of Calls Answered within 10 secs

Benchmarking:

Aside from the police.uk 999 data there is no other readily available benchmarking data for Contact Management, however CoPaCC produced a Police Contact Management Contact Analysis report in March 2020. This analysed a wide variety of Contact Management metrics. Most notably this identifies that Essex Police is an outlier for a low number of overall 101/999 calls per 100k population as shown in figure 13.
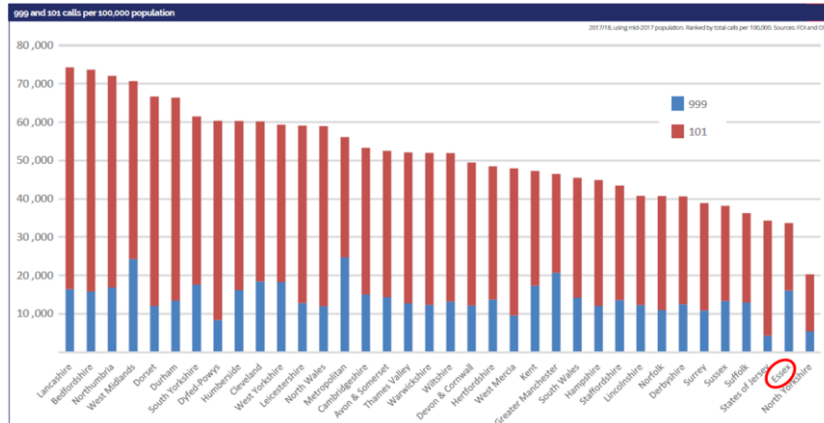
Figure 13 - National 999 and 101 calls per 100,000 population (Essex Circled in Red)

101 calls per 100k of the population are not recorded separately in the data set, but Essex places 11th out of the 36 forces that responded to the data request for 999 calls per 100k population (Figure 14). This demonstrates the issue is not with 999 calls but instead that the Force are an outlier for a low volume of 101 calls per 100k population. This could be related to previously poor performance for 101 answer times and means that as performance improves, there is a potential for increased 101 calls.
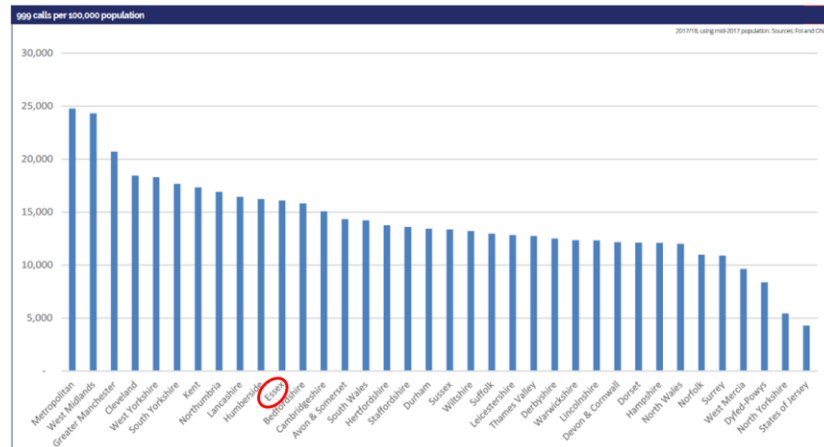

Figure 14 - National 999 calls per 100,000 population (Essex Circled in Red)

6.0   Implications (Issues)

The national contact management strategy sets out a number of strategic assumptions which include;
-       Contact will continue to rise.
-       Contact will continue to be complex and will increase in complexity.
-       Contact management staff will continue to spend increasing time resolving contact.
-       Resolving complex contact will require increasing emphasis on partnership working and skills mix.
-       Technology will continue to evolve and provide new means to contact the police service and the public will continue to expect a choice of contact channels for key services.

-        Resources for policing will continue to remain constrained.
-        Contact management will continue to be a key enabler for overall police service delivery.

6.1   Links to Police and Crime Plan Priorities

The very nature of the work within the Force Control Room and the Resolution Centre touches upon all 7 priorities within the Police and Crime Plan (Extension 2020-2021) but in particular:

Priority 1 – More local, visible, and accessible policing
Collectively we are known as Contact Management Command. We are the face of Essex Police to the majority of people who come into contact with us, we are also responsible for the front counter provisions across Essex where our staff welcome members of the public into our stations.

We are striving to be more accessible, provide a quicker and more efficient service than ever before. We will continue to search for innovative ways to improve, particularly where IT development is concerned.

Priority 2 – Cracking down on anti-social behaviour
By improving our year on year wait times on the 101 system, members of the public are more likely to hang on the phone to report instances of ASB so it can be properly investigated. We also accept reports of ASB via our online reporting system on our website.

Underpinning all of our public contact, we are putting the victims are the heart of what we do, taking time to understand their needs, and getting them access to the services or resources they need to help them in their time of need.

6.2   Demand

As per the content of the report

6.3   Risks/Mitigation

There are 2 force risks record in relation to contact management:

1130 If the Force is unable to manage existing and future demand through the use of technology and more efficient business processes it may not be able to provide an effective service that protects people from harm

2659 Staff vacancies / absence & tech failure (Athena, iHub, MDT) risks RC workload exceeding staff capacity, not adhering to NCRS/HOCR & breaching Op Athena Red threshold. In particular, EP ability to record crimes within 24 hours, QA & Link investigation, allocate to LPAs & service 101 / internal police call demand. Undermining ability to meet force plan, respond to victims, maintain confidence.

Both risks are managed through the contact management programme board, there are a number of mitigating actions which focus around business process, staff recruitment, retention and development, technology and financial support.

One of the main risks is around staff retention, the current market and pay levels for the command.

6.4 **Equality and/or Human Rights Implications**

None identified

6.5 **Health and Safety Implications**

None identified

7.0 **Consultation/Engagement**

C/Supt Stuart Hooper 42001564 – Head Contact Management
Operational Support Team – Contact Management

8.0 **Actions for Improvement**

The improving picture detailed in this report is a result of a more effective and efficient service including better mapping of resource against the demand profile.

We have improved our performance management framework including the use of performance dashboards created by the Operational Support Team within Contact Management which helps us identify our resourcing vs demand picture. This allows us to work towards having the right staff in the right place at the right time.

An enhanced level of scrutiny on daily performance by the command team has helped drive performance and focus our staff on priorities each day.

9.0 **Future Work/Development and Expected Outcome**

We will continue to make ourselves more accessible and provide a better level of service to the public, several projects are underway to further our performance in the next reporting period:

- The delivery of the new Motorola Integrated Communications Control System (ICCS) for the command. Led by an IT project team. Delivery 2023.
- The recruitment of the PSE Uplift (growth of 30FTE). Contact Management Command aims for all positions to be filled by the January intake.
- The continuous review and drive of our recruitment campaign to attract to role and work towards a full establishment
- The Contact Management Command Discovery Report has been written and is awaiting Chief Officer review as part of one of the four force change programmes.
- Development of a CMC STRA