Performance and Resources Scrutiny Programme 2023

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

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1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to provide an overview of the performance of Contact Management Command's call handling for emergency and non-emergency calls and other reporting services within Essex Police. A separate paper has been created that specifically relates to High Harm and the Responding to Incidents Policy.

No decisions are required in relation to this paper.

2.0   Recommendations

This paper is for noting only. The Contact Management Command performance improvement is subject to a Force change programme, which is scheduled for completion in 2025. In the interim, there are various action plans that are scrutinised via a Gold Group and through regular reporting to Chief Officers to ensure performance improvements are being made.

3.0   Executive Summary

This paper has been requested to assess performance of the service provided to the public by the Essex Police Force Control Room (FCR) and Resolution Centre (RC) since 2016 to present date, highlighting call handling performance and methods available for members of the public to report crime.
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The volume of total calls since 2016 has grown exponentially. A decrease in 101 (non-emergency) calls into Essex Police has been replaced with an increase in 999 calls. Only a low volume of incidents reported via 999 are converted to emergency dispatches indicating that many 999 calls do not require an emergency response. It is apparent that members of the public are misusing the 999 system as they believe this will result in a quicker service. Work is continuing to educate the public about when to use the 999 system, and to highlight the other reporting mechanisms that are available. This includes media campaigns, such as 'Help Us to Help You." Work is ongoing with other Policing Commands to educate staff on how they can support appropriate messaging when engaging with victims, partners and the wider public. Additionally, there is robust recruitment and resource management planning to optimise efficiencies within the Command.

Increased demand is seen each year between the months of May and October. This consistently peaks in the summer months between June and August, and is expected to consistently recur each year. Throughout the peak period there are increases in call volume, but the impact is widespread across all Commands. January and February trend as the quietest months for public contact across all channels.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic (which was declared in March 2020) when national restrictions were in place, call volumes and wait times to answer calls were positively impacted. Once national restrictions were lifted, call volumes expectedly increased. It is not anticipated that COVID-19 will have any further impact on performance.

In 2020 the process of answering calls changed. Previously 999 calls were answered and if the caller was not calling with an emergency, they would be asked to call back on 101. This was changed and meant that all calls answered as a 999 were dealt with at first point of contact as per Approved Professional Practice (APP). This would be one explanation as to why the increase 999 calls has occurred (post pandemic).

Essex Police wait time for 999 calls falls within the National agreed standard of 10 seconds, although performance is not consistent.

There is no National guidance for 101 call answering times. The Force is not consistent in the answering of these calls, although there has not been much difference across the seven years in relation to the time the public waits for a call to be answered.

999 Call data forms part of the Home Office metrics for Police Forces. The data includes the combined BT and Force answer time. A monthly breakdown of Essex Police positioning compared to other forces is included within this paper in section 5.

Essex Police has a minimal abandonment rate for 999 calls which demonstrates a positive response to the public for emergencies. The abandoned rate has nonetheless grown across the years at a similar rate to the increase in 101 calls, suggesting a strong correlation between volume of demand and performance. This issue is being addressed through Op Analogy as a mechanism to improve this for the public. Op Analogy involves increased numbers of staff supporting the Quality of Service Team. Performance under Op Analogy is closely monitored through a weekly Gold Group.

Other Command areas are aware of how staff can impact on the quality of the victim's journey and assist in reducing some of the calls for service. Many calls relate to people requesting updates on matters that have been previously reported. Other governance meetings support this work (for example, the Victims and Witnesses Action Group) as they review compliance with the Victim's Code, which includes complying with the requirement to provide timely and meaningful updates to victims.

To be accessible for the public we have grown our "Single Online Home" function for the public and our "Live Chat facility," providing the public with a range of methods to contact Essex Police. There is also a self-service function to offer ease of reporting for the public.

Recruitment and resourcing have had significant investment throughout 2022 and this has resulted in an uplift of staff. However, while new staff are still learning and embedding, this has so far not been reflected in the improvement of performance. A recently established Public Contact Gold Group is being held weekly to address the importance of how the wider Force is prioritising and improving the initial response to the public. Actions from this group are resulted quickly and efficiently to drive improvement.

Contact Management Command need to address four areas for improvement, as identified by our Force self-assessment and subsequently captured in our recent HMICFRS PEEL assessment. A comprehensive plan has been developed to address these issues and progress is monitored through the Contact Management Programme Board and the Chief Officer Group (COG). There is an awareness of the consequences to the public and the force if improvements are not made. Failure to do so may result in loss of public confidence, negatively impact on victim satisfaction, and skew the understanding of true crime levels.

A Target Operating Model (TOM) has been produced with the aim of becoming more efficient and effective through technological advancements. This forms part of the Force's major change programme and is due to be completed by 2025.

As part of the TOM a Workforce Management Tool has been requested, which will seek to forecast the required resource against demand and manage annual leave more effectively to the operational requirement. It also aims to support the recruitment requirements of having the right people, in the right place, at the right time. The procurement process has recently commenced, and the projected completion date is April 2024.

It should be noted that not all data is available for the period requested.

The full performance picture is detailed in section 5 and the key points are summarised below:

- The public of Essex favour telephone contact over other methods of reporting that are available.
- The data reflect that the 999 system is being misused, as only a low proportion of incidents reported via that line are recorded and treated as emergencies.
- Callers are using 999 as they believe this will result in them receiving a quicker service.
- The reduction in volume of 101 calls does not result in improved performance across any metric, as resourcing and taskings are realigned to cope with 999 demand which will always take precedence.
- Additional methods of reporting (online, or live chat) help us to understand the true crime picture, and use is encouraged, as it gives us the fullest crime picture and provides an avenue for potential victims, we may otherwise have been unaware of. However, people are telling us they would not have reported their incident unless the option was there to do so online, meaning demand is not moved from telephone lines to create capacity, and in fact additional demand is created.
- The Command suffers with an issue described as double demand. This term is used to describe when a member of the public makes a report via one method (for e.g., 101) but then uses another mechanism to seek updates or further information (perhaps an email online or a further call about the same issue).

4.0   Introduction/Background

Members of the public can contact Essex Police through a variety of channels to report crime. Their preferred choice remains 999 emergency and 101 non-emergency telephony.

Emergency 999 Calls

The Beating the Crime Plan National target for 999 calls to be answered in is 10 seconds. This includes the BT answer time. Our "Grade of Service" (GOS) refers to the percentage of calls answered within the 10 second period.

999 calls unanswered in 10 seconds get re-presented. No calls ever drop out unless the user drops the call.

Non-Emergency 101 Calls to FCR

Essex Police have set an aspiration to answer 101 calls within 5 minutes. This was an agreed target based on performance. There are no National targets for non-emergency calls, however, the HMICFRS PEEL performance framework shows that there is an expectation for Forces with switchboards to have an abandonment rate of less than 5% There is a correlation between the time taken to answer calls and the abandonment rate, so clearly it is essential to keep call answer times to a minimum whilst meeting the needs of the caller.

The level of 999 and 101 calls fluctuates by day, time, and month. This can be driven by events, weather, incidents, and seasonality.

On the busiest days, the call volumes can reach 1,200 for 999 and 1,000 for 101 within 24 hours.

5.0 Current Work and Performance

Throughout 2022 Contact Management has sought to make improvements in Call handling within Essex Police. Measures introduced include:

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

The following graphs show the performance of our call handling functions, including data where possible from January 2016. An assessment is provided after each graph. Graphs have been split into two periods where the data would not be easily viewed or reviewed and fall broadly into the two periods either side of the national COVID-19 restrictions to support the understanding of changes in performance trends during this period.
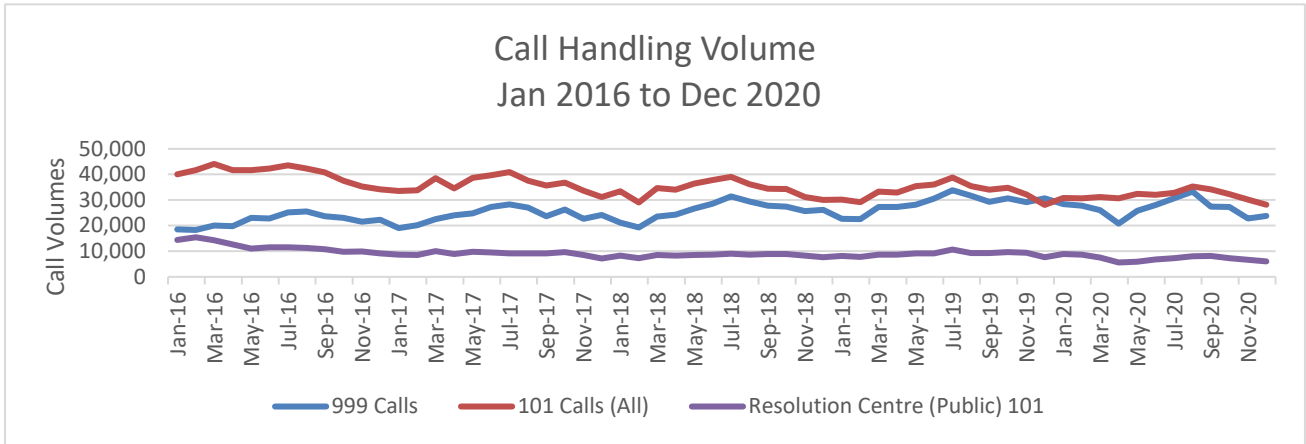
Call Handling Volume
Jan 2016 to Dec 2020

Figure 1 – Volume of calls taken in FCR & RC January 2016-December 2020

Fig 1 above shows the calls taken in the Force Control Room (FCR) and the Resolution Centre (RC). It shows a downward trend in 101 calls but an upward trend in 999 calls. It is believed that this is because the public believe they will receive a quicker service through 999. Media campaigns such as 'Help Us Help You' and work with local policing commands to upskill staff to relay accurate information about appropriate reporting channels seek to address this issue.

The Resolution Centre demand has remained steadier. Generally, calls should be transferred to the RC where there is no apparent need to deploy a resource to the caller, and those requiring a response are sent to the FCR. This will not always occur if the caller selects the wrong option on the IVR or if the switchboard operator has not fully understood the nature of the call.
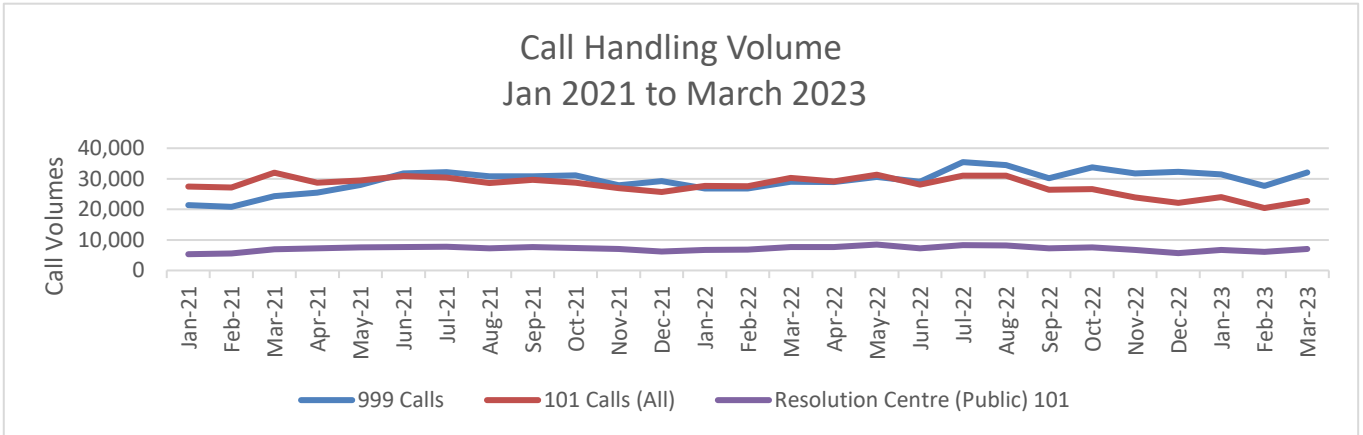
Call Handling Volume
Jan 2021 to March 2023

Figure 2 – Volume of calls taken in FCR & RC January 2021-March 2023

Fig 2 above shows the calls taken in the Force Control Room (FCR) and the Resolution Centre (RC) from January 2021 to March 2023. While each year there is an increase in call volumes from as early as May, there is consistently a peak in the traditional summer months of June to August. While historically January and February have seen the lowest levels of demand, in February 2023 there has been an increase in calls. There is no evidenced reason for this, although a hypothesis may be that the cost-of-living crisis is contributing to rising crime levels.

May 2022 was the busiest month for 101 calls. This relates to May having the most Bank Holidays and the increase in call volume after a Bank Holiday. This is reflected across both the RC and FCR, and it can reasonably be anticipated that this trend may repeat in 2023.

In January 2016 there were 18,599 calls on the 999 system. In January 2023 there were 26,783 calls on the 999 system, which is a 44% increase. In the same period 101 calls have reduced from 40,034 in January 2016 to 27,639, amounting to a decrease of 30.9%. This reflects a shift in choice for the public in how they reach us, which may be attributable in part to undesirable wait times on 101. While it may be expected that reduced 101 call volumes would improve the time it takes for them to be answered, this has not occurred, as resources are realigned to prioritise the increased volume of 999 calls.
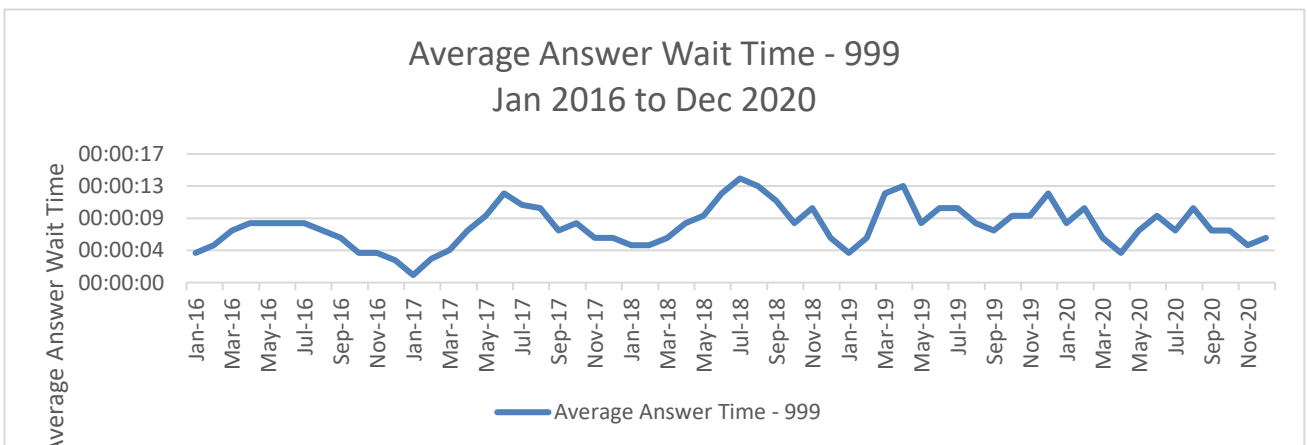
Average Answer Wait Time - 999
Jan 2016 to Dec 2020

Figure 3 – Average 999 answer wait time January 2016-December 2020

Fig 3 above highlights an average wait time of 0:00:08 for 999 calls, which is within the National guidance of 10 seconds.

The highest wait time in this period was 0:00:14 seconds and the lowest wait time in this period was 0:00:01. January and February often have the lowest wait times, reflecting the clear correlation between volume of calls and answer times. In 2020 speed of service was good in January, but is even lower in March, however this is when the COVID pandemic was declared, and calls for service dramatically decreased.

Between June and August of each year there is a peak in the average call answer time, which has already been highlighted as the peak summer demand period. It is also notable that in June and early July 2020 there was an IT (Information Technology) fault (now rectified) which meant that 101 calls were prioritised over 999 calls.
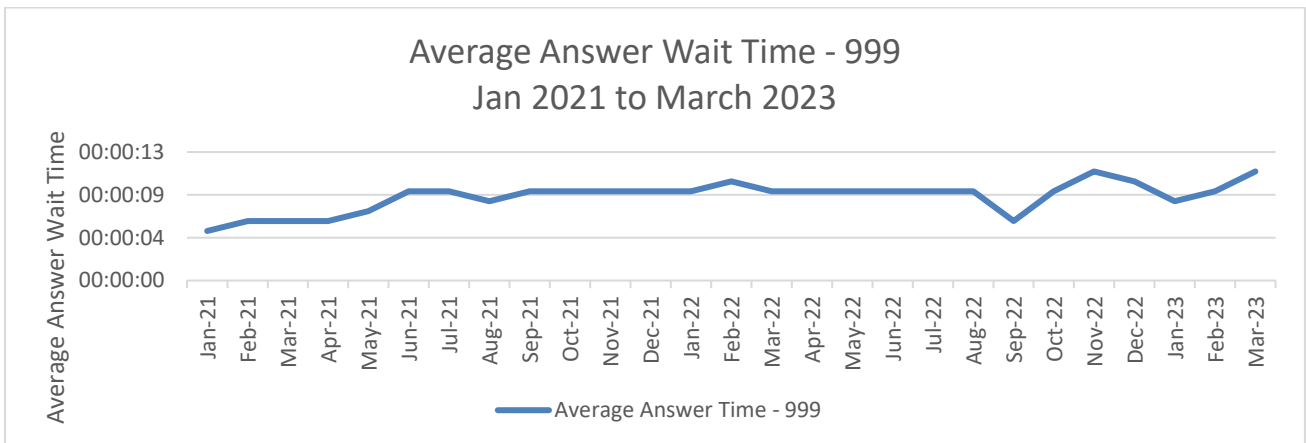

Figure 4 – Average 999 answer wait time January 2021-March 2023

Fig 4 This graph reflects the average call answer time for the more recent period of January 2021 to March 2023. It highlights more consistency in service than in previous years. This would be an impact contributed to by COVID-19 restrictions, as throughout much of 2021 the country was in various stages of national restrictions. In 2022 the average wait time increased to 00:00:09, which is still within the National guidance. The rise reflects the release from national COVID-19 restrictions and subsequent increase in calls for service. September 2022 produced the shortest wait time for the year at 0.00.06. It was around this time that the 'Help Us Help You' campaign was launched, there was a recruitment drive, and improved levels of sickness in the Command, all of which would have contributed to this improvement.
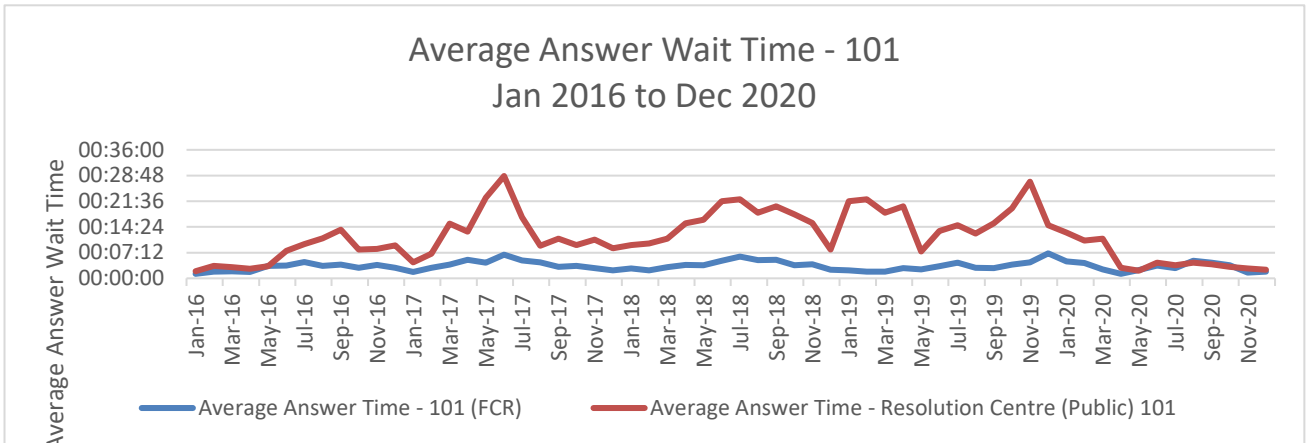
Average Answer Wait Time - 101
Jan 2016 to Dec 2020

Figure 5 – Average 101 answer wait time in FCR & RC January 2016-December 2020

Fig 5 above shows the 101 calls taken in the Force Control Room (FCR) and the Resolution Centre (RC), and the average time it takes to answer the calls. Firstly, it consistently takes longer for calls to be answered in the RC than FCR, and secondly, there is far more fluctuation in this performance for the RC than FCR.

Calls take longer to answer as the processes required in the RC take longer to complete because of the nature of calls received there. RC staff will be required to create a crime report, send victim letters and referrals and complete other assessments. There are several changes that have impacted on processes in the RC that may have impacted on their performance and contributed to some of the fluctuation, which include the introduction of CARA (a risk assessment model), changes to the shift pattern and the introduction of the Single Online Home service.
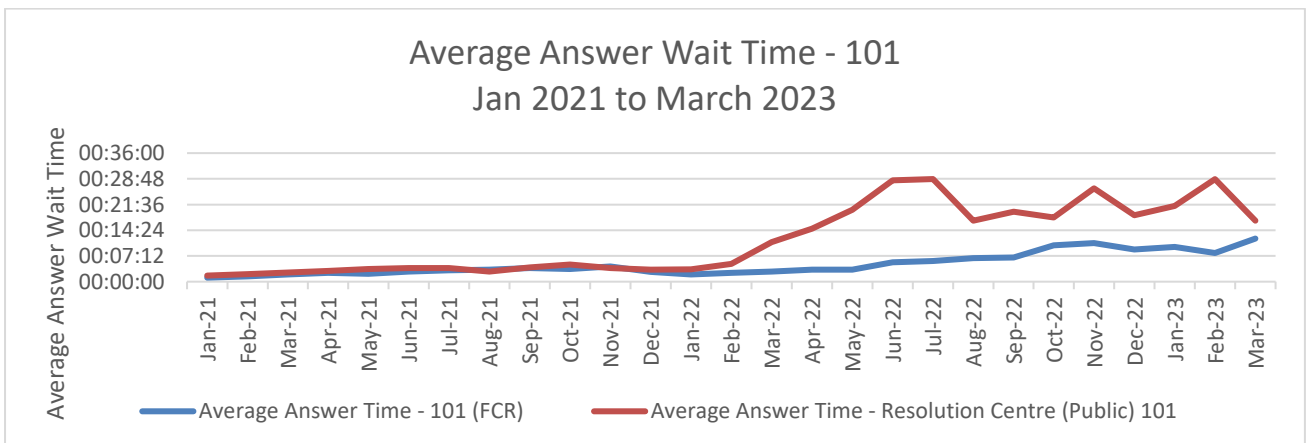
Average Answer Wait Time - 101
Jan 2021 to March 2023

Figure 6 – Average 101 answer wait time in FCR & RC January 2021-March 2023

Fig 6 above shows the 101 calls taken in the Force Control Room (FCR) and the Resolution Centre (RC) for the more recent period of January 2021 to March 2023.

The consistent performance reflected in 2021 is attributed to COVID-19 restrictions and fewer calls being received.

The average call wait time for 101 in FCR from January 2021 to March 2022 was 00:04:52. This was a 58 second increase on the last seven years' average. The average call wait time for 101 in RC from January 2021 - March 2023 was 0:11:45. This was a 5 second increase on the last seven years' average. Since February 2023, the FCR has improved their average answer times, which may have been contributed to by an improving resourcing picture.

In the RC, the wait time for a call to be answered has increased gradually since the beginning of 2022. This may be linked to increases in the call duration, as staff now have additional questions and details to discuss with callers.
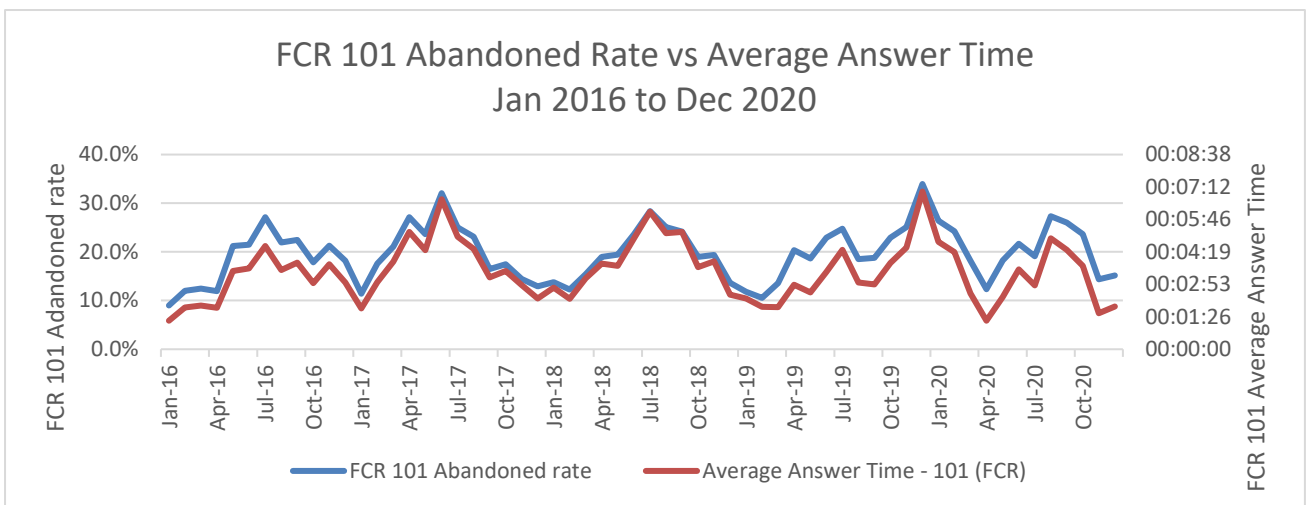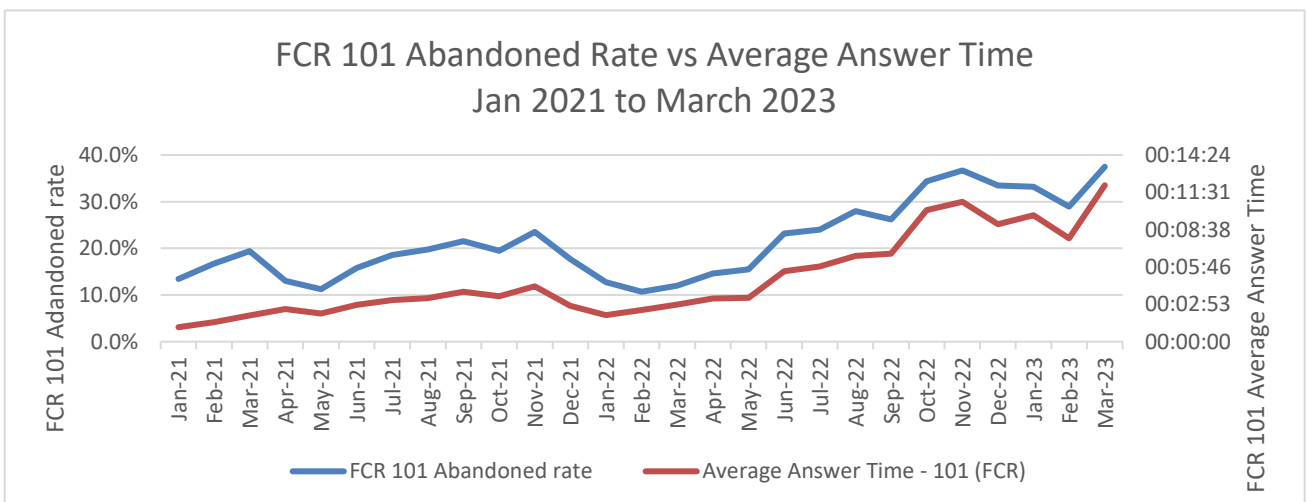

Figure 7 - 101 abandoned calls in FCR January 2016-March 2023

Fig 7 above shows the 101 abandoned calls in the Force Control Room (FCR), with a date range of January 2016 to December 2020. The average abandoned rate for this time period is 19.7%. The lowest rate is 9%, and the highest is 34%. There is a strong correlation between the abandoned rate and the average answer time. Often if a caller abandons their call, they will attempt through another reporting channel (i.e. 999). Officers and staff across the force encourage people to use the option of contacting us through online services when the caller cannot receive a timely response.

Figure 8 - 101 abandoned calls in FCR vs average answer time January 2021-March 2023

Fig 8 above shows the 101 abandoned calls in the Force Control Room (FCR) from January 2021 to March 2023. The abandoned rate has increased by 24.1%. The lowest month was 10.7%. The highest month was 37.5%. The correlation between answer time and abandonment rate is consistently strong. The time taken to answer calls and the subsequent abandonment rate are both worsening. The plans that have been developed to tackle this area for improvement are comprehensive. It includes a specific '101 Improvement Plan', a strong recruitment pipeline and use of the newly embedded PSSI Sergeants to support activity and performance management.

The time to answer an emergency 999 call is quick and abandoned calls are rare. A caller may change their mind, because the emergency necessitates them to hang up the phone for their safety. The number is always called back. A policy is in place for call takers in this circumstance.

The 101 callers may abandon their call if the wait time is too long, or inconvenient to hang on at that moment in time. The caller may have decided to report via another means (such as online), and on occasion they may call back later (a recent dip sample revealed 22% callers abandoning will call back within 2 hours).

Abandoned rates for emergency calls are monitored closely; maintaining excellent service for answering emergency calls is our highest priority.

Operation Analogy was set up in response to deal with failure demand. Our own self-assessment and HMICFRS PEEL findings stated that the Force needs to improve the time it takes to respond to answering and dealing with non-emergency public calls as well as reduce the abandonment rate and waiting times.

In the last quarter, a review was undertaken due to the slow improvement in performance in both the FCR and RC. The result is that Chief officers have directed that officers will be re-deployed from other areas of the Force to support the existing work of the Quality-of-Service Team (QoS) and to support failure demand under Op Analogy.
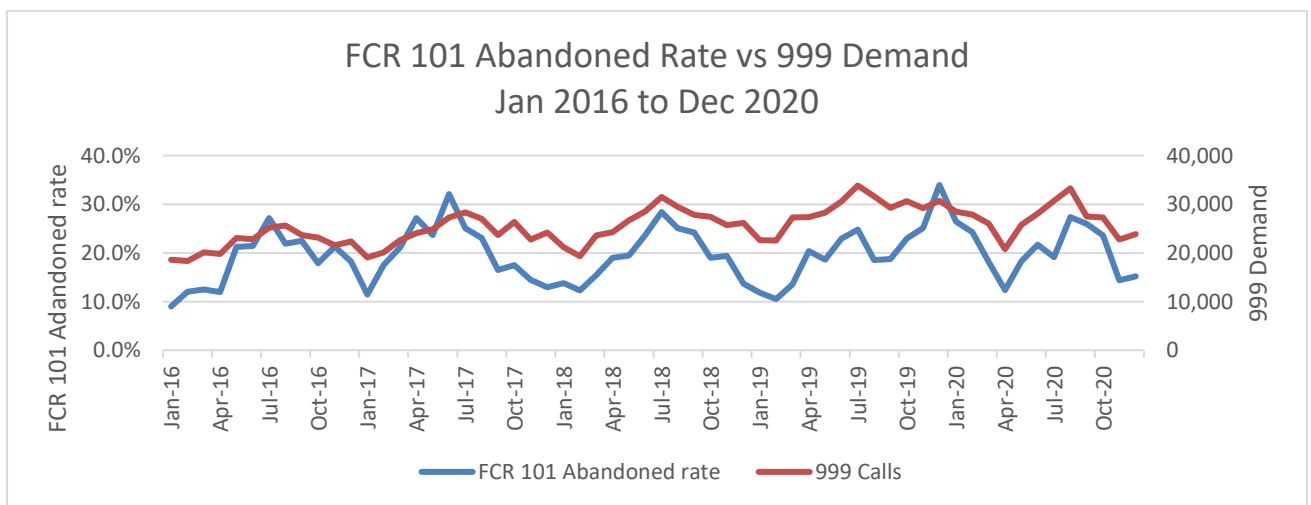

Figure 9 – 101 abandoned calls in FCR versus 999 demand - January 2016-March 2023

Fig 9 above shows the 101 abandoned calls taken in the Force Control Room (FCR), versus the demand of 999 calls. The data presented is between January 2016 and December 2020. As 999 calls will always take priority, where volumes are higher, there is generally increased abandoned rates for 101, and vice versa.
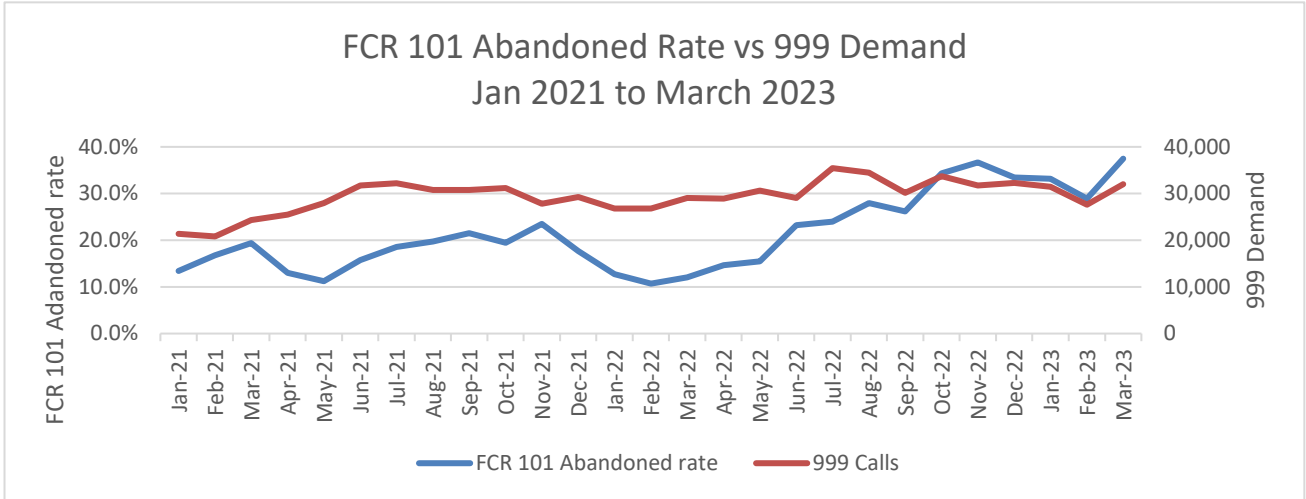

Figure 10 - 101 abandoned calls in FCR versus 999 demand - January 2021-March 2023

Fig 10 above shows the 101 abandoned calls taken in the Force Control Room (FCR), versus the demand of 999 calls between January 2021 and March 2023. Generally, the 101 abandoned rate mirrors the increases in 999 demand.

New Reporting channels

Essex Police has invested in "Single Online Home" (SOH). It makes it easier for the public to report crimes. The service was introduced in September 2019. This is a Nationally recognised platform that has been adopted by most Forces in England and Wales. This gives the public an alternative to calling either 101 or 999 (albeit it appears the option has attracted additional reports, rather than shifting demand from telephone channels). Data is not available prior to January 2020, which is reflected in Figure 11 below.
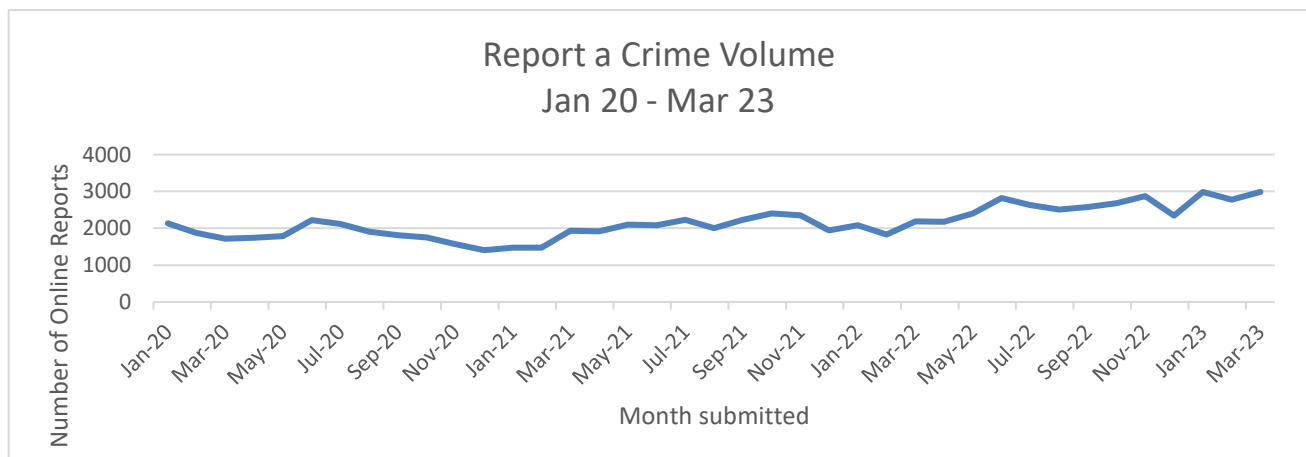

Figure 11 – SOH crime recording January 2020-March 2023

Fig 11 above shows the recording of crime via the "Single Online Home" (SOH) platform. It shows an increase of 37.7% from January 2020 to March 2023. The lowest recorded volume of crimes in a month was 1,406 and the highest was 2,986. There was a decrease in the use of this platform during the COVID-19 pandemic. The average recorded volume of crimes via SOH is 2,133 in this time. 2022 has seen the busiest year to date in online recording and there is an upward trend on the data to end of March in 2023.

What can be recorded via this platform has been expanded since it was first adopted. This has contributed to the increase in volumes. In November 2021, following a national pilot, the implementation of victims reporting domestic violence online was introduced. It should be noted that it is believed this reporting method has increased volumes of crimes being recorded, rather than necessarily shifting the reporting from other channels. Victims have recorded on their reports that they would not have contacted police if the online systems were not available. There are other functions available within SOH that the Force may consider adopting in the future (for example, rape and serious sexual abuse), which again would impact on performance data.

Essex Police has also invested in "Live Chat." This is an instant messaging conversation held with a Call handler. It makes it easier for the public to report crimes. The service was introduced in May 2020. This gives the public an alternative to calling either 101 or 999.
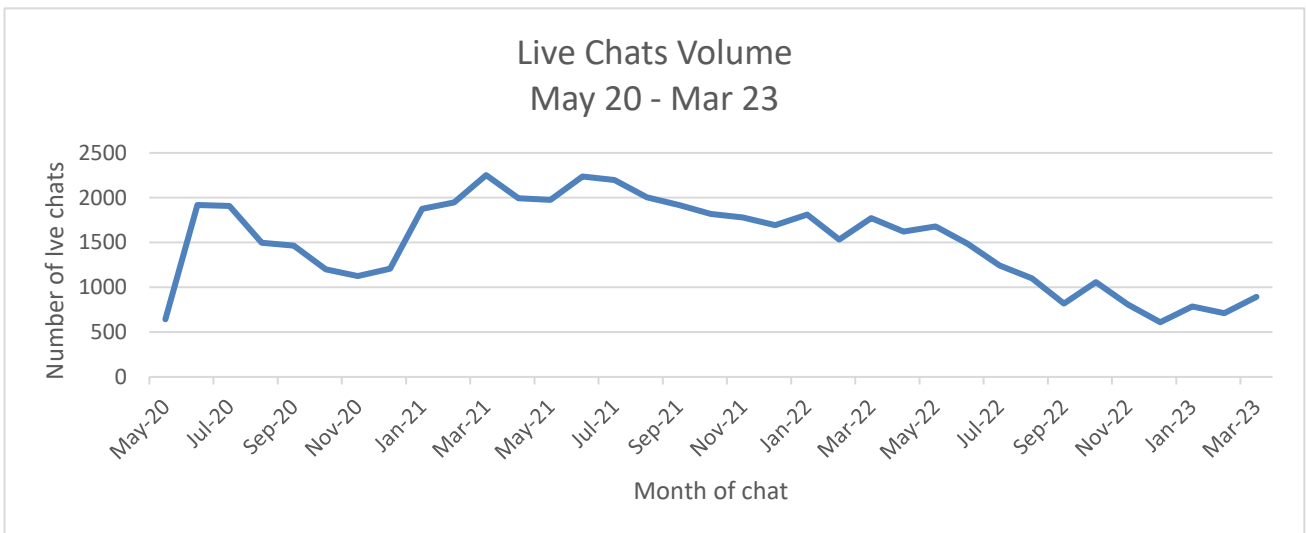

Figure 12 - Live Chat volume May 2020-March 2023

Fig 12 above shows the volume of chats held with Call Handlers from May 2020 to March 2023. The lowest number of chats was 610. The highest number of chats was 2252. This is a 249% increase. The highest volume of chats occurred during COVID-19 as many staff worked from home and worked on Live Chat as they could not answer calls.

The service has reduced in the latter part of 2022 due to a reduction in the number of operating hours.

Live Chat is offered when the public make their initial call for service into Essex Police. This may account for an increase in the abandoned calls as the public channel shifts.

Benchmarking

Month	Jan-22	Feb-22	Mar-22	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23
Position	18th/44	23rd/44	14th/44	17th/44	15th/44	13th/44	8th/44	12th/44	7th/44	13th/44	26th/44	19th/44	12th/44	12th/44	12th/44

Figure 13 - Essex national position in 999 call answering times.

Fig 13 above shows Essex Police's position in comparison to other Forces of England, Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland for 999 call answering times.
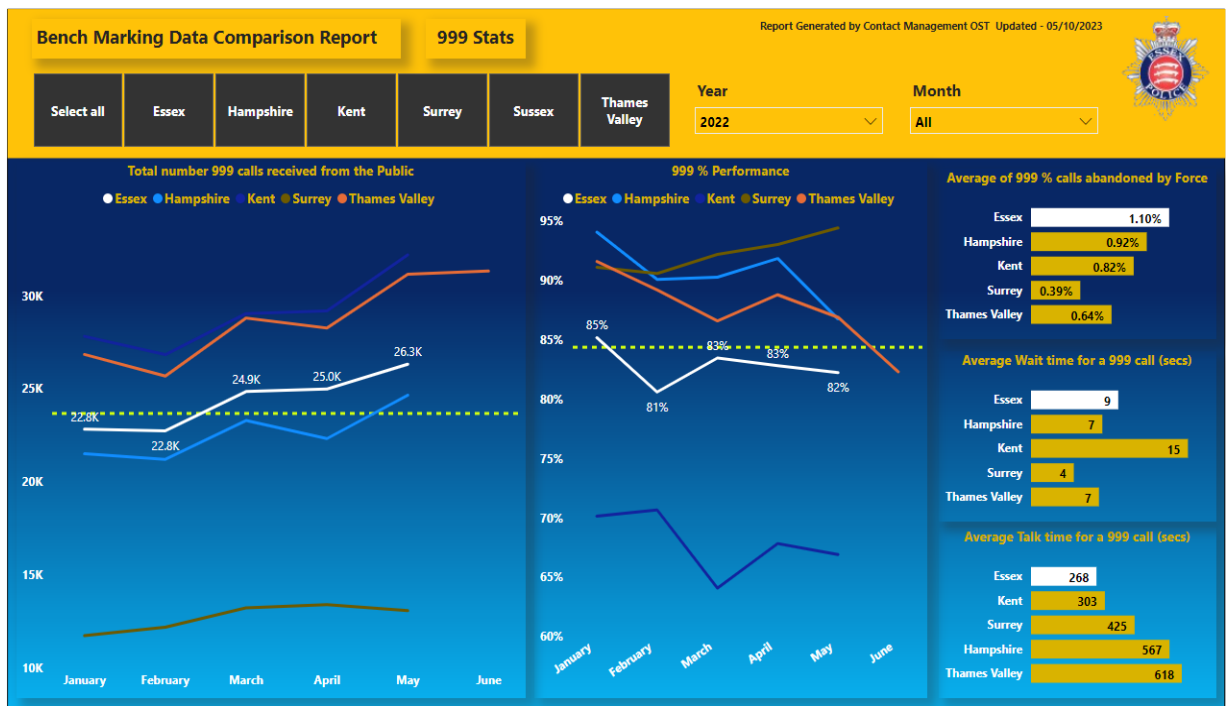

Figure 14 - 999-call volume received and the performance for 2022 in comparison to 5 other Forces.

Fig 14 above shows our 999-call volume received and the performance for 2022 in comparison to five other forces. The forces referenced all form part of the Southeast regional group. They are not all within the most similar force group (MSG), which are normally considered when comparing performance. The data provides insights about where Essex is performing well and less well than other forces, allowing discussions about best practice through the regional group.
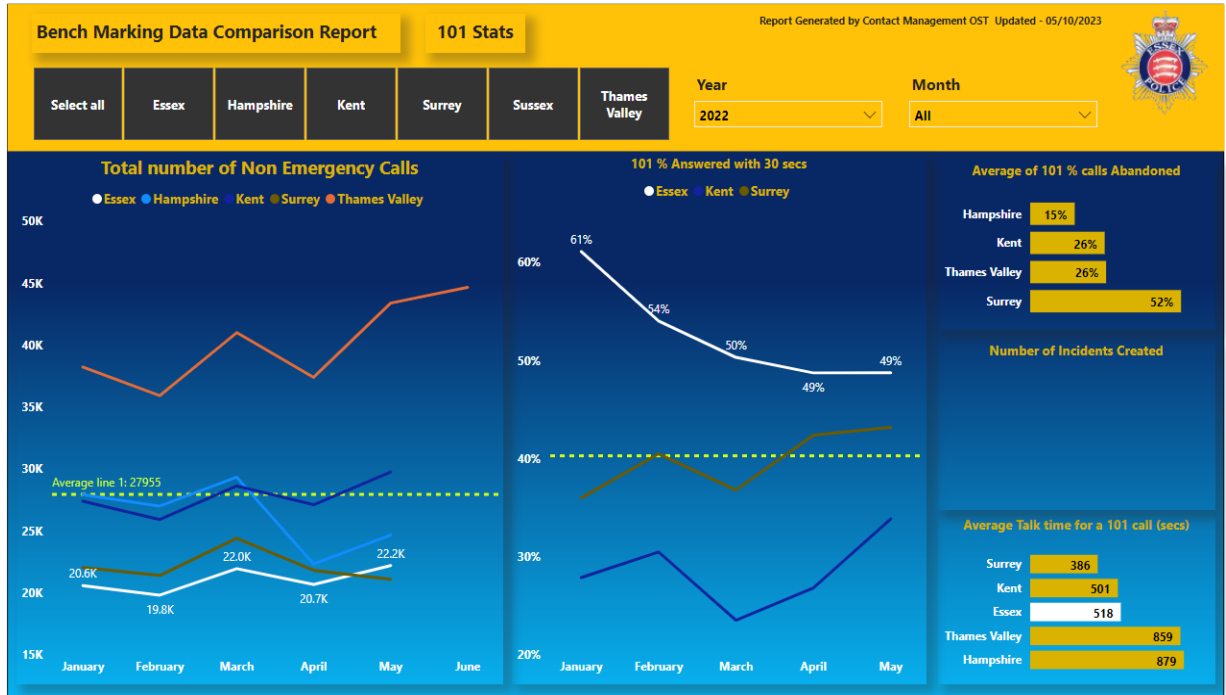
Figure 15 - 101 call volume received and the performance for 2022 in comparison to 5 other Forces.

Fig 15 above shows our 101-call volume received and the performance for 2022 in comparison to the same five forces. This graph clearly shows that Essex is an outlier for the volume of 101 calls received and can again be considered against others to share best practice and learning.
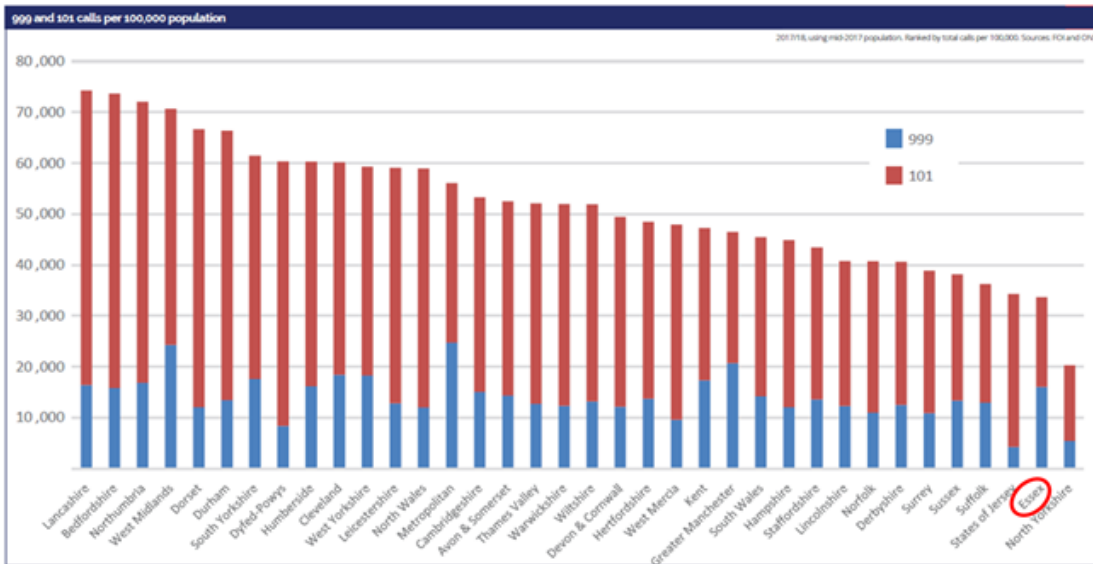

Figure 16 – CoPaCC analysis 101/999 of the ratio (data produced in March 2020)

Aside from the police.uk 999 data there is no other readily available benchmarking data for Contact Management, however as reported in the previous period, CoPaCC (a policing governance and insights company) produced a Police Contact Management Contact Analysis report in March 2020 which analysed a wide variety of Contact Management metrics. Most notably this identified that Essex Police is an outlier for a small number of overall 101/999 calls per 100k population as shown in

Figure 16 above. The analysis from March 2020 remains the most up to date comparison between forces.
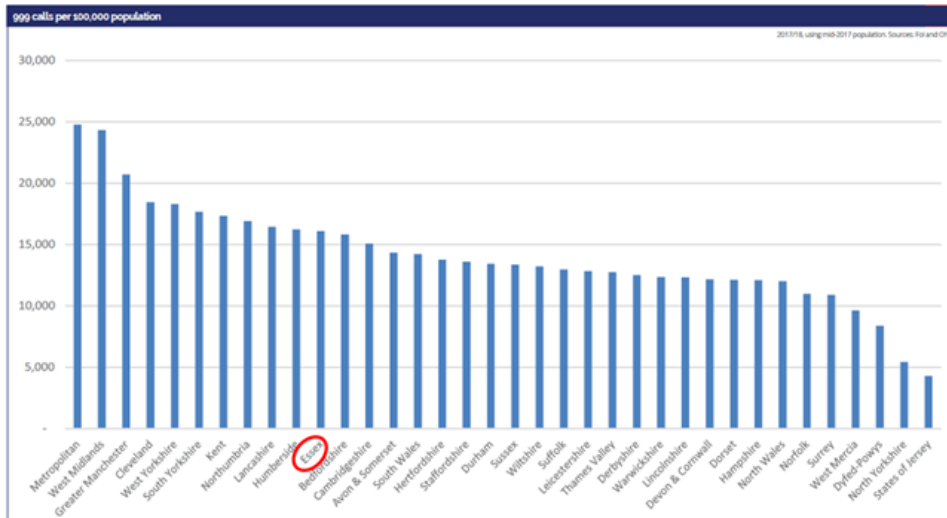

Figure 17 - 999 calls per 100k population

101 calls per 100k of the population are not recorded separately in the data set, but as shown in **Figure 17** above Essex places 11th out of the 36 forces that responded to the data request for 999 calls per 100k population. This demonstrates the issue is not with 999 calls but instead that the Force is an outlier for a low volume of 101 calls per 100k population. This could be related to previous poor performance for 101 answer times and means that as performance improves, there is a potential for increased 101 calls volumes.

6.0 Implications (Issues)

Areas for improvement have been identified as follows:

AFI 3 - The Force needs to improve the time it takes to respond to non-emergency public calls for service and reduce the abandonment rate and wait times.

AFI 4 - The Force needs to make sure that repeat callers are routinely identified.

AFI 5 - The Force needs to make sure that call takers give appropriate advice on crime prevention.

AFI 6 - The Force needs to do more to ensure that routine calls for service are accurately assessed and prioritised and any delays in response are kept to acceptable levels.

A plan is in place to deliver the above AFI's. Progress is monitored through the Contact Management Programme Board and reported on in COG. The impact of not delivering could result in negative impact on victims and the wider public, a loss in confidence and satisfaction, and diminished understanding of the true crime picture.

The National Contact Management Strategy sets out several 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.

Our Force plan is to help people, keep them safe and catch criminals. To do this, we need to reflect on our processes and procedures to deliver the service expected of us by the public.

6.1 **Links to Police and Crime Plan Priorities**

This has not changed from the previous report. The October update was reviewed. The nature of the work within the Force Control Room and the Resolution Centre touches upon all seven 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 most people who encounter 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, and to 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 (Anti-Social Behaviour) so it can be thoroughly investigated. We also accept reports of ASB via our online reporting system on our website.

Underpinning all 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**

The detail of demand and changes in the demand are shown in section 5. This evidences that demand remains high, and the expansion of online channels is not currently resulting in a reduction in the number of calls being presented to Contact Management. Public preference appears to be by telephone contact and the data reflects a current preference for 999 over 101.

6.3 **Risks/Mitigation**

There are two Force risks record in relation to Contact Management:

- 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.

- 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, Essex Police's ability to record crimes within 24 hours, QA & Link investigations, allocate to LPAs (Local Policing Areas) & 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 several mitigating actions which focus on business process, staff recruitment, retention and development, technology and financial support.

   One of the main risks locally is around staff retention, with various issues contributing to this. Such issues include low pay scales, limited career progression opportunities, and demanding and traumatic roles.

   An increase in call wait times may result in the public not reporting a crime in future which will result in the force not having a true understanding of crime levels in the county. Op Analogy aims to tackle this issue and is monitored through the Gold Group.

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

Contact Management Command owns various policies and procedures that provide the necessary governance and direction for those operating in the command. Each policy is annually reviewed with consideration for an Equality Impact Assessment to ensure they take account of any legislative changes or best practice. Each policy is sent for consultation across all relevant commands and staff networks to ensure they are informed and inclusive.

The journey of the victim is a focus point for the Force. The new Victim's Bill 2023 will govern the Force's delivery of the Victim's Code of Practice (VCoP), which highlights 12 victim rights. Contact Management Command translate victim letters into various languages to clearly indicate their rights under VCOP, Crime Allocation

Rationale Assessment 500 (CARA 500) question set identifies victim vulnerability and their entitlement to enhanced rights, and victim letters signpost to victim support.

6.5   Health and Safety Implications

Contact Management Command owns various policies and procedures that provide the necessary governance and direction for those operating in the command. Each policy is annually reviewed to ensure they take account of any legislative changes or best practice. Each policy is sent for consultation across all relevant commands and staff networks to ensure they are informed and inclusive.

7.0   Consultation/Engagement

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

8.0   Actions for Improvement

Having received feedback from staff, an NPCC (National Police Chiefs Council) peer review, self-assessment and the HMICFRS inspection, the Contact Management operating model has been reviewed. The key themes are given below with additional information on the action the force is taking:

- Workforce morale: the command completed a survey which highlighted some concerns about staff morale and wellbeing. There was general reporting of feeling undervalued, concerns about pay, and concerns about shift pattern reviews. Annual leave and training were also raised as areas of concern.
- "Early Resolution": The allocation of crime to the front line could be resolved in Contact Management Command (CMC) without officer deployment.
- Complicated process: CMC process can be lengthy and complicated, resulting in a poor contact journey for the public.
- Capacity rarely meets demand: CMC resourcing is supported by use of overtime and frontline officers. Even with this support, key performance indicators are still not met.
- Incident response is flawed: There are gaps in ownership and accountability and poor management for non-emergency incidents and priority incidents, leading to poor response times.
- Technology exploration: There is scope for innovation in our technology to improve efficiency in our processes. Improvement could be made in initial assessments, diverting demand and prioritisation. Customer Relationship Management Software would support the service to the public.
- Victim confidence: Poor performance contributes to a gap in the public's confidence in our service.
- A new strategy is required to make Contact Management consistent and inclusive. Ensuring our people are equipped and enabled with the right technology to deliver the service has been proposed in the form of a Target Operating Model.
There has been an investment of 30 additional FCR staff to improve call taking resilience and deliver a high-quality service, and 15 PSSI (Performance Solving and Service Improvement) Sergeants who joined CMC in June 2022. This is a new role

focusing on non-immediate DA (Domestic Abuse), high harm, concern for welfare incidents, and supporting staff development.

CMC has seen large scale recruitment and training, for both the 30 FCR staff and for significant vacancy gaps seen in both FCR and RC. FCR is expected to meet establishment in March 2023 and once realised, this will see an increase in resilience with less need for Force abstraction into CMC and reliance on overtime. RC recruitment challenges continue and are being addressed through the same recruitment process.

In 2022 CMC successfully recruited 151 new members of staff, an increase of 81% from 2021. The impact is a prolonged period of experienced staff tutoring rather than contributing to business-as-usual tasks, in turn negatively impacting our grade of service (answer 90 percent off 999 calls in 10 seconds, and 90 percent of 101 calls in 5 minutes). Contact Management's percentage of establishment with less than 1 years' service is 19% in total. In FCR, this is 25%. By comparison, the overall percentage of the Force with less than 1 years' services is 9%.

Predicted levels of leavers in CMC are five a month. This has reduced in recent months and is thought to have settled since the initial flux of post-COVID-19 movement, and improvements in the command around retention. A plan is in place to maintain resourcing levels against anticipated movement once the large-scale recruitment is complete. While some leavers move outside the organisation, positively CMC provides many transferable skills and is a point of entry to the wider organisation (police officers, PCSO's and staff roles in other Commands).

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

Performance will continue to be reviewed to deliver the best service we can to the public of Essex when they contact us.

In 2023 Essex Police Launched its SMS Text survey. This sees a survey sent to citizens who contact Essex Police (except excluded offences such as Domestic abuse) with the following 4 questions ;

1. How satisfied were you with the time it took to answer your call?
2. How satisfied were you with the ability of the call handler to resolve your issue?
3. How satisfied were you with the overall service provided by the call handler?
4. Finally, good and bad, tell us about the overall service that you received

Questions 1-3 are scored (1-5) based on the level of service and questions 4 is free text. The responses are then converted into a percentage satisfaction.
This not only allows direct feedback to the contact handler around the service but provides an   of the teams for the combined service provided. Since the data captured in February 2023, there have been 11229 responses recorded.

Team	Time to answer call	Ability to resolve call	Overall service provided	Total

Command	79%	82%	86%	82%
FCR	78%	81%	85%	81%
CCA	81%	83%	83%	83%
RC	84%	93%	97%	91%

Figure 18 above shows the total satisfaction for the command through first contact is 82%, but this rises to 91% for the resolution centre (RC). This initial data tends to suggest that although the citizens recognise, they have a longer wait for the service, when they receive it, they are highly satisfied with the ability of the team to resolve the matter. As we receive further data this may allow us to consider what is the grade of service for non-emergency contact that the citizens are prepared to accept.

We are working on the most efficient ways of working via innovative technology or a review of processes to achieve this. There are several projects already underway to achieve this:

- The delivery of the new Motorola Integrated Communications Control System (ICCS) for the command. Led by an IT project team. Delivery 2023.

- There is a continuous recruitment and training pipeline in CMC with vacancy gaps improving. Turnover will continue and has a defined model with plans in place to maintain establishment. There is a challenge providing consistent training and tutoring to cover both the recruitment uplift and normal movement.

- Quick Input Form is being rolled out to reduce duplication of work and begin the investigation process when referring from FCR to RC to enable the resolution at the first point of contact.

- Introduction of a Rapid Video Response Team, as an additional and effective way of providing a fast time, face to face consultation with an officer, in response to the needs of our victims of Domestic Abuse.

- Piloting new technology (BT SMS), better multi agency communication is being explored via Multi Agency Instant Transfer (MAIT) with a Teams channel in the interim to reduce 999 calls.

- Procurement is in progress for the new Workforce Management Tool (WFM).

- Exploring a new and more effective and intelligent IVR (Interactive Voice Response) to help transfer the public to the relevant investigating officer or department more quickly, rather than generating a 101 call.

- Contact Management Command see a continuous process of self-assessment with improvement plans, such as the 101-improvement plan. The Command commissions internal reviews and external audits.

- A new Contact Management Strategy (CMS) has been launched to deliver the force plan in areas of force culture; data; technology; training and tutoring; standards of service; supportive management; partnership; and community.

- Work is being done across the force, to make more resources deployable through Op Clarity (Task not Ask) to improve response times. And the CMC STRA (Strategic Risk Assessment) will deep dive into how to better manage incident response and set out what is required for the force capability to respond to incidents.

- The "Help us help you" media campaign will continue to educate the public on the best channels of communication to the police, and signpost to other agencies where necessary.

- CMC are engaging with the productivity review to ensure the force is consistent with the new data standards.

- Reduction in failure demand by a collective mindset towards a force approach.

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