

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 this report is to provide the Chief Constable and the Office of the Police, Fire, and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC) with an overview of the ‘Responding to Incidents’ procedure, an assessment of how well Essex Police is doing at responding to ‘high harm’ crimes and a summary of the ambition set for future delivery.

2.0 Recommendations

This paper is for noting. No decisions are sought.

3.0 Executive Summary

Essex Police has a 'Command and Control of Incidents' procedure which is designed to ensure an effective, victim focussed response to reports of crime or other calls for assistance. This was last updated in July 2023.

The procedure describes how Essex Police call takers assess threat, harm, risk, vulnerability, and engagement (THRIVE) to prioritise the response to incidents. The procedure also highlights the national standards the force seeks to adhere to, including a standard for incident creation and a standard for crime recording.

High Harm Crimes – The Essex Police Definition

Whilst there is no national definition, Essex Police has determined High Harm offences are those which most significantly impact on the public, namely burglary of people's homes, robbery, rape, serious sexual offences, and violence with injury.

Essex Police has a clear policy position of the burglary of people's homes, which is that we will attend all of them and aim to do so within one hour.

For the other high harm crime types the target response time is set accordingly taking account of the nature of the incident reported using the THRIVE methodology (see section 4.0).

Current Performance Headlines

The force has set the objective to attend 100% of high harm crimes and has made the necessary changes to dispatch policies to achieve this.

In particular, the force strives to attend Dwelling Burglaries within an hour of report and has put mechanisms in place to ensure this. Dip sampling supports that the force is broadly meeting this objective.

There has been a decrease in response times to High Harm being met with September 2023 showing a decrease in emergency response times.

Essex Police has a better attendance rate and response times for high harm crimes than for many other incident types.

Essex Police is attending emergency and routine graded high harm incidents quicker than non-high harm incidents. However, in addition to attending all high harm crime, Essex Police are also striving to improve response times to high harm incidents, especially those graded as a priority response.

4.0 Introduction/Background

The Force Control Room (FCR) take all emergency calls whilst non-emergency calls are shared between the FCR and the Resolution Centre (RC). Recorded incidents are risk assessed at the earliest opportunity. The National Decision-Making model (NDM) is utilised alongside the THRIVE assessment.

THRIVE is then applied as a risk assessment tool, used widely in police forces across England and Wales, which considers six factors to assist in identifying the appropriate response grade allocated to recorded incidents, providing a framework for assessing public need, vulnerability, and other key elements of service delivery.

The 'Command and Control of Incidents' procedure sets out that incidents will be graded against the following criteria:

THRIVE is a risk assessment tool that considers **6 factors** to assist in identifying the appropriate response grade which are based on the circumstances of the incident and needs of the caller (not all factors will be applicable to all circumstances):

1. Threat:

- This is the identification of whom or what is subject to any threat and what is the threat;
- The threat can be towards a person(s), property, public safety, community cohesion, service reputation of Essex Police, or nothing.

2. Harm:

- This is an assessment of the threat, which, if carried out, what would be the level of harm caused;
- Person – what is the perceived/potential or level of injury?
- Property – what could be the extent of the damage?
- Force reputation – significant negative impact, no impact
- Community Impact – Severe reduction in community confidence, potential for disorder, minimal or no impact

3. Risk:

- This is the probability of the threat being carried out
- None, Minimal/unlikely, high/very likely
- A rationale should be provided

4. Investigation:

- Is there a need for an investigation and if so what level of investigation is proportionate? (It is noted that there is new APP guidance from August '23 and there will be some modest policy amendments to put focus on investigation to ensure compliance with the new standards that have been defined)
- Do police need to physically attend the scene?
- Can the investigation be completed by the RC?
- If this is not a police matter, has the caller been referred to the correct agency to deal?

5. Victims and Vulnerability:

- Vulnerability is defined as: “***a person is vulnerable if, as a result of their situation or circumstances, they are unable to take care or protect themselves, or others from harm or exploitation***”;
- A person may be vulnerable due to them being a victim of crime, or due to their personal situation or may be vulnerable due to their current circumstances, at the time of the incident;
- When assessing vulnerability, the following factors may indicate someone is vulnerable:
 - Family Circumstances;
 - Personal Circumstances;
 - Health and Disability;
 - Equality and Diversity;
 - Economic Circumstances;
 - Repeat Victimisation.

6. Engagement:

- REFUSE – Not a legitimate police call for service
- REFER – Call is better suited for another agency
- RESOLVE – Dealing with issues at the first point of contact
- RESOURCE – Deploying the appropriate team to service calls, which do not require attendance or investigation
- REASSURANCE – Crime prevention advice/Neighbourhood Watch/SMS links

All incidents will be continually assessed throughout the lifecycle of the incident to ensure our response remains appropriate.

The response grading of the incident and the subsequent allocation of incidents will be based on the information gathered from the caller and the subsequent THRIVE assessment at the time.

The procedure sets out that incidents will be graded against the following criteria:

- **Emergency Response** (either grade 1 – urban or grade 2 – rural)
- **Priority Response** (grade 3)
- **Routine Response** (grade 4)
- **Resolution Without Deployment** (grade 5)
- **Appointment** (grade 6)

The National Contact Management Grades [NCMG] provides for two types of grades of contact; emergency contact, where an officer is required to go immediately, or all other contact, defined as non-emergency contact.

An emergency response grading is given where the call handler’s assessment of the incident would indicate that a person’s life is in danger or where there is information to indicate someone is vulnerable to immediate violence, serious injury or serious damage to their property. In these circumstances it is vital for policing resources to

be deployed and arrive on scene at the earliest opportunity, not only to safeguard victims of crime and members of the public but also to secure and preserve the scene of any crime, identify forensic opportunities and potential witnesses, and apprehend suspects if still on scene.

Incidents graded as emergencies shall have a police resource assigned immediately; this will include, where required, redirecting resources from non-emergency graded incidents.

Where it is determined that the necessity for an emergency response grading is not met but that there is still a degree of importance or urgency associated to the incident then a 'Priority' grading will be given. A 'Priority' incident indicates to the attending officers that there is a degree of urgency to arrive on scene at the earliest opportunity, as whilst no one is in immediate danger there are investigative opportunities around evidence capture, e.g. forensics, witnesses etc.

Where there is no urgency to respond to an incident immediately, but proportionate enquiries are identified which require the attendance of a police officer or other member of staff, then incidents are graded as a 'Routine' response.

If a crime has been reported but attendance at the scene is not required, then the incident is graded as a 'Resolution Without Deployment' and sent to the Resolution Centre. Following a crime allocation assessment, the investigation is then concluded with no further action, sent to the Case Investigators within the Resolution Centre for further investigation or allocated to the most appropriate department to investigate.

Where no immediate attendance is required, and the victims agrees to it, an appointment may be booked for an officer to attend at the earliest, most convenient time for the victim. Appointments will be attended by Local Policing Area officers via a diary system, which is managed by the Force Control Room. Following appointment, the attending officer and their supervisor will make an assessment as to the most suitable department to progress the investigation for the victim. This ensures a timely response to the incident in agreement with the victim and that the most appropriate policing resource owns the investigation through to resolution.

The procedure outlines steps to be taken when re-grading incidents, including downgrading an incident. An incident will never be downgraded due to the unavailability of resource, or if the caller for a domestic abuse incident ends the call prematurely and contact cannot be re-established.

The target attendance time for each grading above is as follows:

Grade	Response	Attendance Target
1	Urban Emergency	15 minutes
2	Rural Emergency	20 minutes
3	Priority	Within 60 minutes
4	Routine	Within 48 hours
5	Resolution without Deployment	No attendance
6	Appointment	By appointment

It should be noted that Essex Police is working to align its grading system with other police forces nationally; this is dependent on an IT solution. The preferred position is that all emergencies (whether urban or rural, are a grade 1, with priority incidents defined as a grade 2, and so on).

Policing resources are deployed to incidents based on their availability and proximity to the incident and most appropriate unit to attend the scene. The majority of emergency and priority incidents are attended by uniformed response officers from either the Local Policing Area or Operational Policing Command, including specialist resources such as Roads Policing, Dogs, Firearms, Operational Support Group, and the Marine Unit. Detectives from the Local Policing Area CID will also respond to incidents where available, especially residential burglaries and when responding to serious violence incidents to maximise investigative opportunities.

Contact Management is driving a renewed focus around command and control. Operation Clarity has been in place since September 2022 to improve the response time attendance to all incidents, and specifically high harm incidents. The objective of the operation is to provide a faster response to more incidents to better support victims of crime. More recently a roll-call process has been instigated for Dispatchers to call up all officers that should be on duty to check their status so the right resource can be deployed at the right time.

Essex Police continues to focus on prioritising early attendance at residential burglaries, not only to safeguard and reassure victims but also to establish an early investigative strategy, including identifying and securing forensic opportunities, witnesses and identification and apprehension of suspects. Every residential burglary remains automatically graded as a Priority response, requiring attendance as soon as possible, or in any case within 1 hour. Ensuring the swift deployment of the best suited resource is supported through Operation Clarity, along with a new roll-call process that ensures Contact Management and staff from other commands have a shared understanding of the resource available.

High harm incidents are given an enhanced level of response where appropriate in the circumstances. For example, all street robberies, including attempts, which are reported to be in progress, or within 30 minutes of being committed, are subjected to our Operation Tigress response plan, and given an emergency response grading. The trigger plan includes several pre-defined set tasks which have been developed specifically by investigators to maximise evidential opportunities and lines of enquiries to identify, locate and apprehend the suspect(s), also known as the 'golden hour' principles.

5.0 Current Work and Performance

This section seeks to highlight the new procedure for command and control of incidents following feedback from a peer review around Essex Police not being compliant with the principles and practice of the NPCC National Contact Management Strategy.

The principles and practice give more detailed guidance to translate contact management strategy into operational delivery, for officers, staff, and the public we serve. The guidance has been developed by the National Contact Management Steering Group and approved by the NPCC Contact Management lead.

This guidance has helped to inform a new 'Command and Control of Incidents Procedure', which was approved via the Contact Management Programme Board and published in July 2023.

Essex Police aims to bring this procedure in line with the national standards set by the NPCC National Contact Management Strategy – Principles and Practice. However, at this time gradings on STORM cannot be changed and we await an update to allow for incident gradings to be reduced from 6 to 5, combining grades 1 and 2. In the interim, the policy assists in guiding the mindset for use of STORM as a command-and-control system rather than an occurrence management system.

Policy on High Harm Attendance

Essex Police will attend all High Harm incidents. There will be no specific response grading set for High Harm incidents; the response grading for each incident will be determined and prioritised based on the threat, harm, risk, and vulnerability as per section 3.4 *Assessing the Risk* of the policy. The only exception to this will be residential burglary incidents, which are automatically graded as a minimum of a priority response requiring attendance within one hour

Contact Management Command are represented at the Op Nightshade bi-weekly meeting chaired by ACC Mariner which focuses on all aspects of attending and dealing with High Harm incidents.

Response to High Harm Incidents

There were 55,216 High Harm incidents recorded in the 12 months to September 2023, a decrease of 5.0% (2,965) from the previous year's total of 58,181.

In the past 12 months, 3,372 residential burglaries were reported, of which 90.8% were attended. There was a total of 32,146 domestic abuse incidents, of which 91.1% were attended. For incidents categorised as 'Other Sexual', there were 4,327 in total, and 59.8% were attended. For Rape, there was a total of 1,744 incidents, and 43% of these were attended. For Robbery, there were 920 incidents, 75.2% of these were attended. For Violence with Injury, there were 12,706 incidents, and 61.6% of these were attended.

The chart below shows that attendance is generally stable at most high harm incidents.

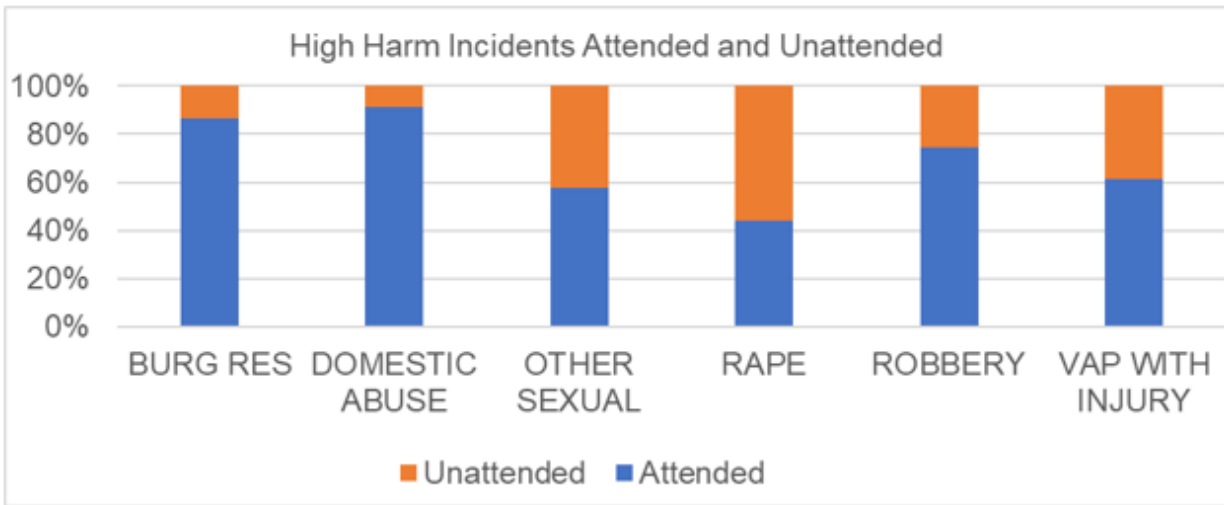


Figure 1 % of HH incidents attended and unattended by call type

Attendance at burglary incidents has increased since the pledge to attend all dwelling burglary was made in October 2022. More than 90% of residential burglary has been attended in the last year.

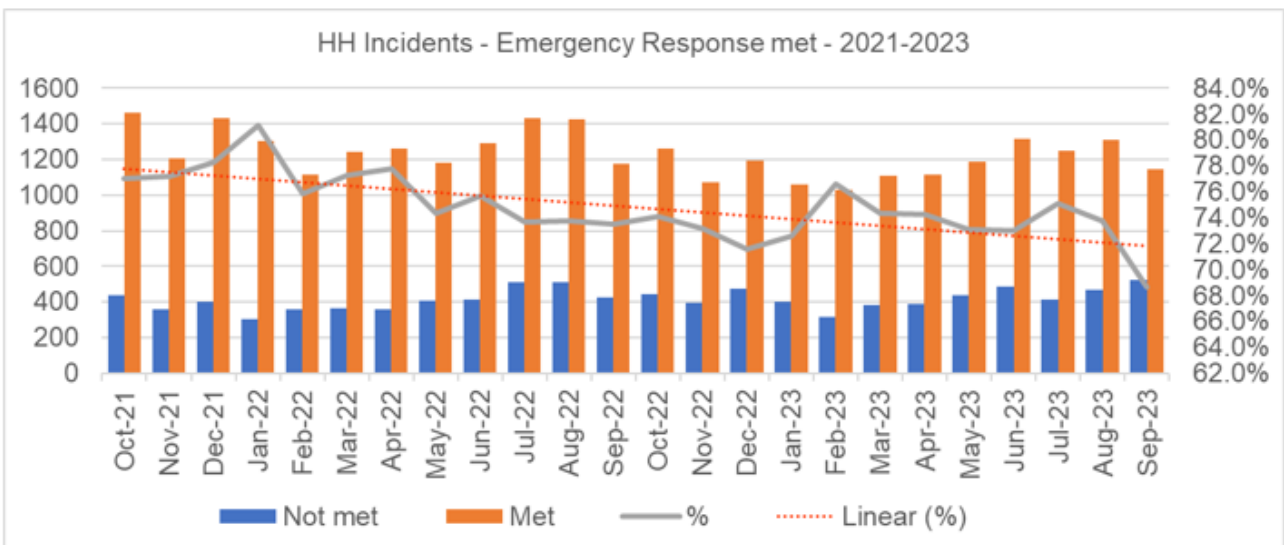


Figure 3 Emergency response within target for High Harm Incidents

Figure 2 shows the proportion of emergency high harm incidents for which the response target was met reflects the overall emergency response rate. There was a gradual fall over time, but a larger decrease is seen at the end of the reporting period. In September 2023 only 68.7% were met. This is a decrease of 4.8% compared to September 2022 when 73.5% were responded to within the target of 15 minutes (urban) or 20 minutes (rural). This may be attributable to the unusually warm weather in September and higher incident volumes against standard resourcing levels.

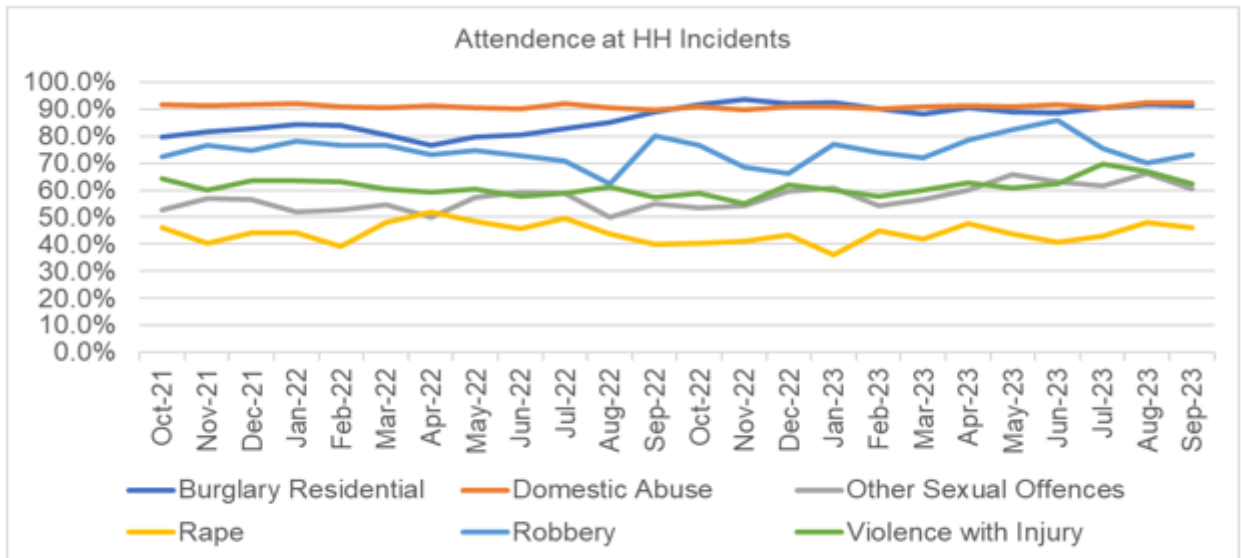


Figure 2 % of HH incidents attended by call type trend over time

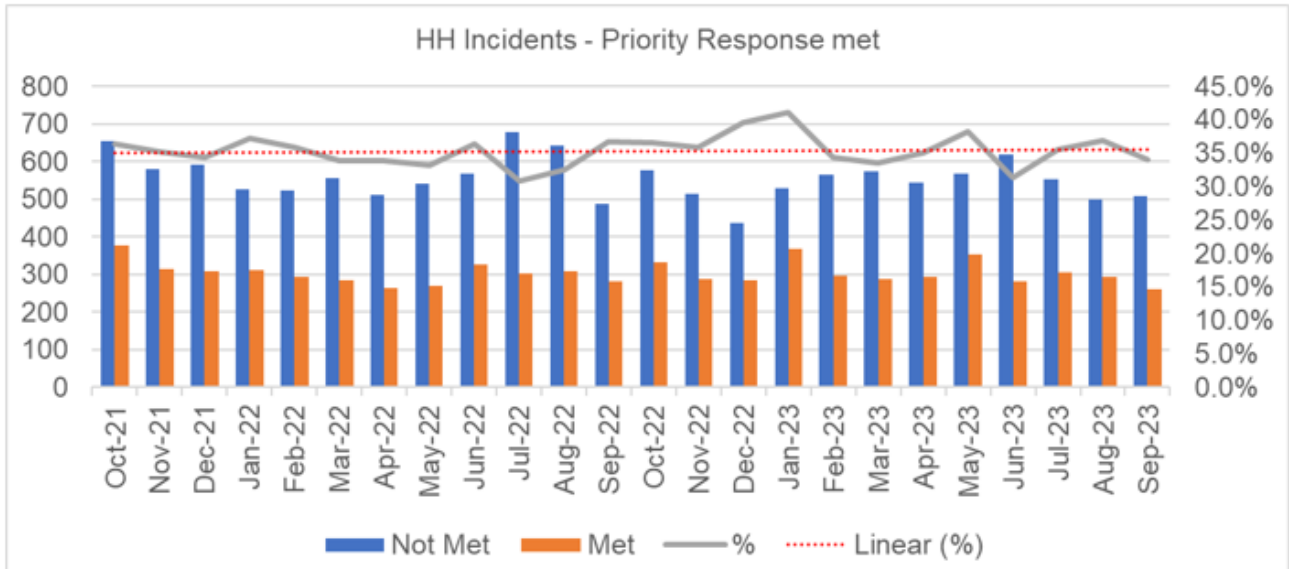


Figure 4 Priority response within target for High Harm Incidents

Figure 4 shows there is a stable trend for attendance in time to priority high harm incidents; this is in contrast to overall priority incident attendance where the rate has fallen slowly over time.

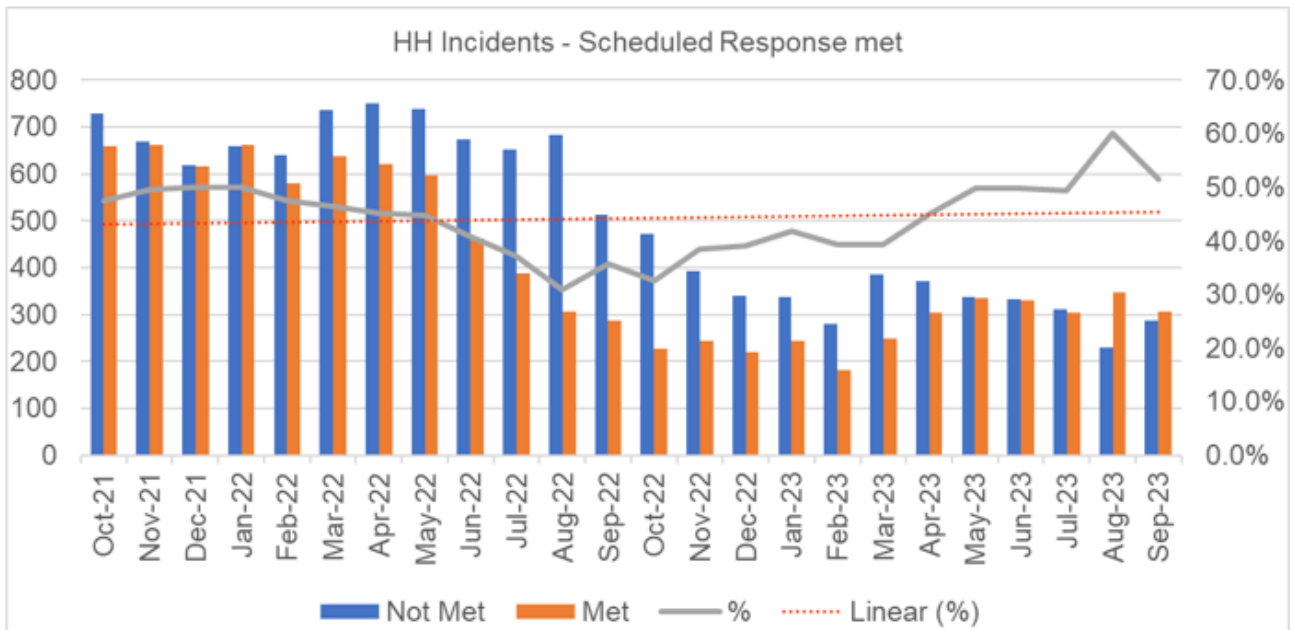


Figure 5 Scheduled response within target for High Harm Incidents

Figure 5 shows the number of high harm incidents graded as a scheduled response has fallen since October 2021; these incidents require a unit to attend within 48 hours. The proportion of high harm incidents attended within this time frame has increased in the last year, reaching a high of 60.1% in August 2023. This demonstrates positive progress against an identified area for improvement.

6.0 Implications (Issues)

Noting the clear ambition the force has, the wider context around contact management nationally is set out in several strategic assumptions which directly influence policing capability to respond to incidents and these 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 nature of the work within the Force Control Room and the Resolution Centre touches upon all 12 priorities within the Police and Crime Plan 2021-24, but particularly in relation to responding to incidents and especially High Harm incidents:

- Protecting vulnerable people and breaking the cycle of domestic abuse
- Reducing violence against women and girls
- Improving support for victims of crime

Through earlier and more effective assessment of threat, harm and risk, our call handlers are identifying vulnerable victims at first contact, ensuring the most appropriate response grading is applied to every call.

Essex Police is aiming to attend every High Harm incident, thereby maximising opportunities to respond to, investigate and safeguard and protect those at most risk of harm.

The Contact Management Strategy 2023-27 underpins all our public contact; we are putting the victims at the heart of what we do, taking time to understand their needs, and providing access to the services or resources they need to help them. As the New Target Operating Model of Contact Management evolves, this approach will be strengthened and become more consistent across all methods of contact.

6.2 Demand

As per the content of this report.

6.3 **Risks/Mitigation**

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

Risk-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.

Contact Management Command will be moving to a new Integrated Command and Control System (ICCS) which will be in place in December 2023, a benefit of which will be greater flexibility and capacity for the handling and grade of service of public calls.

Risk- 2659 Staff vacancies / absence and tech failure (Athena, iHub, MDT) risks RC workload exceeding staff capacity, not adhering to NCRS/HOCR and breaching Op Athena Red threshold. In particular, Essex Police's ability to record crimes within 24 hours, quality assure and link the investigation, allocate to LPAs and service 101 / internal police call demand. Undermining ability to meet the force plan, respond to victims and maintain confidence.

Contact Management is one of the few commands within Essex Police where the ambition is to consistently maintain full establishment of staff with a zero-vacancy factor. The command continues to work with Recruitment to ensure a consistent recruitment pipeline.

The Public Contact Gold group chaired by DCC Prophet considers the wider force response to support demand.

Both risks are managed through the Contact Management Programme Board. There are several mitigating actions which focus on business processes, staff recruitment, retention and development, technology and financial support.

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 of Contact Management

8.0 **Actions for Improvement**

Essex Police has an ambition to attend 100% of all high harm incidents and to improve response times to all incidents. Work is currently underway to achieve this. Op Clarity remains in place; the objective is to identify and dispatch the most

appropriate resource to get to incidents more quickly and to provide a better response to victims.

Essex Police has updated the policy for responding to residential burglary incidents to attend all such incidents within one hour.

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 which will naturally lead to improvements in responding to incidents.

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

Mentoring of call takers has commenced with support from the Problem-Solving Sergeants to ensure that the call takers obtain as much information at the initial call taking stage as possible, to assess the call appropriately and effectively and ensure the correct policing response.

9.0 Future Work/Development and Expected Outcome

Contact Management Command will be moving to a new Integrated Command and Control System (ICCS) in December 2023; a benefit of which will be greater flexibility and capacity for the handling and grade of service of both emergency and non-emergency public calls.

Introduction of action cards for specific incident types will assist staff in giving the best response to High Harm incidents. These are expected to be released to the FCR in stages.

Implementation of the Target Operating Model starting in April 2024 has perceived benefits for all areas of business including response to High Harm incidents. As the model evolves and the join up between Contact Management and the wider force increases, it is requested that consideration is given to future iterations of this paper being combined with the wider Public Contact paper, with a keen focus on the rolling 12 months of performance data and less emphasis placed on the historic data which is of less value with the evolving model.