

Performance and Resources Scrutiny Programme 2024

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 give an overview of the performance of the Contact Management Command. This includes call handling for emergency and non-emergency incidents, as well as the effectiveness of our response to high harm crime and compliance with corresponding policies.

2.0 Recommendations

This report is for noting, no decisions are sought.

3.0 Executive Summary

This report has been requested to provide an overview of performance within the Contact Management Command. Previous submissions have separated call handling performance and response to high harm crime; however, agreement was sought to combine the reports as the work is intrinsically linked. The frequency of reporting has been amended to quarterly, and as such the report focuses on the performance and work in the period from October to December 2023. Where available, data is provided from 2016 to show trends over time, but it should be noted that this is not available for all metrics, and some of the national data is not available for the full period.

The performance indicators referenced in the previous report remain unchanged. There is a national target of a maximum of 10 seconds to answer 999 calls. The grade of service (GOS) referenced in the report refers to the percentage of calls answered within the 10 seconds.

There is still no national direction on the target for 101 answering times; however Essex Police maintains an aspiration to answer as quickly as possible, with a maximum tolerance of 5 minutes. There is a far greater emphasis at this juncture across forces and through HMICFRS to reduce the abandonment rate and to understand the contributing factors.

The performance section of this report details positive progress against key metrics; 999 call handling performance remains consistent, and significant improvements have been observed in 101 call handling and abandonment rates. In addition, there is an increase in positive channel shift to online services. It is anticipated that the installation of the new telephony system that occurred in January will drive further improvements in the forthcoming period.

The report details the formal areas for improvement as outlined by HMICFRS, along with audited risks for the Command; this includes plans for mitigation and progress in terms of improvements in performance, and/or mitigation of risk.

4.0 Introduction/Background

The Contact Management Command currently comprises the Force Control Room (FCR) and the Resolution Centre (RC). All emergency calls received via 999 are handled within the FCR, and non-emergency calls via 101 and other contact channels (i.e. single online home, live chat and email) are processed by the FCR and RC. The dispatch function facilitates our response to incidents and is managed within the FCR. There are other departments that fall within the responsibility of the command, with workstreams beyond the scope of this report.

The Target Operating Model (TOM) is on schedule to launch in April 2024. The FCR will become the Contact Centre, where all primary contact will be received, providing a more efficient service for the public and our partners. In January, a new telephony system was installed (ICCS), which is more stable and efficient, and provides more advanced opportunities for performance management.

The Command strives to achieve the best possible service to the public and continually reviews and seeks to improve processes. As a result of internal reviews, self-assessment, peer reviews and proactive efforts to identify and review best practice, it was recognised that there was a need for improvement and that action needed to be taken. This self-assessment was consolidated following an inspection by HMICFRS, following which the Command was given four areas for improvement (AFIs). These are summarised as follows:

1. Non-emergency call handling wait times and abandonment rates
2. Providing the public with effective crime prevention advice
3. Our response to repeat callers and victims
4. Our handling and response to non-emergency incidents

The AFI relating to crime prevention has been discharged in the relevant period, and the remaining three are all progressing positively. HMICFRS conducted an interim visit in October where pleasing progress was reported. The command has invested significantly in understanding our abandonment rates which has been received positively and is being shared on a national level.

The relevant procedure that relates to the response to high harm (and all other) incidents is the Command and Control of incidents policy (reference D0503). This remains unchanged in the reporting period, with the latest version published in July. Some minor amendments are due to be presented to the Contact Management Contact Board which take account of changes under APP that relate to reasonable lines of enquiry on investigations. This procedure outlines how incidents are prioritised using the THRIVE model (detailed in the previous report) and how response grades are determined. It also details the roles and responsibilities of officers and staff involved in this process.

5.0 Current Work and Performance

Developments have been fast paced in the reporting period with improvements in performance seen across core metrics.

- Contact Management Command are pivotal to the delivery of 'Right Care, Right Person' and the benefits observed are significant. A review by the project lead in November shows 1000 less officer deployments when compared with July, less than half the number of calls received for the same comparison points and 2/3rd fewer incidents attended.
- A command analyst was recruited in October, supporting the command's performance requirements.
- Resourcing and retention within the Command is in a vastly improved position, with current data reflecting that across all departments in the command, including officers and staff, we are at 93.3% against establishment. Sickness and absence levels are also improving. This is indicative of a positive culture change following concerted and ongoing efforts to invest in the workforce, including developmental programmes of work and clear reward and recognition processes.

- ICCS was installed in January 2024. While too early to formally assess the benefits, this is an exciting progression for the command that should assist our call handling performance.
- The HMICFRS AFI relating to crime prevention advice was discharged in the reporting period, and further progress has been made on the remaining three.
- The Victim's Engagement Portal went live across the force in December. This will assist us at a force level with ensuring compliance with the Victim's Code of Practice but also affords an opportunity to keep victims better updated, which in turn will assist with reducing the failure demand that currently impedes the performance of the command.
- We have seen improvement in channel shift in the reporting period, with more people reporting online.
- Opportunities through GoodSAM are being more fully utilised following a meeting with the company. The RVR team can now access translation services and more.
- The Quality-of-Service team have aligned to Contact Management Command in the reporting period which has enabled the conclusion of Operation Analogy.
- An extension to the call handling triage to include to FCR commenced from November (initiated for the RC in August with strong improvements in performance observed). This has resulted in improvements in FCR 101 call handling performance, improvements have been maintained in the RC.

Call Handling

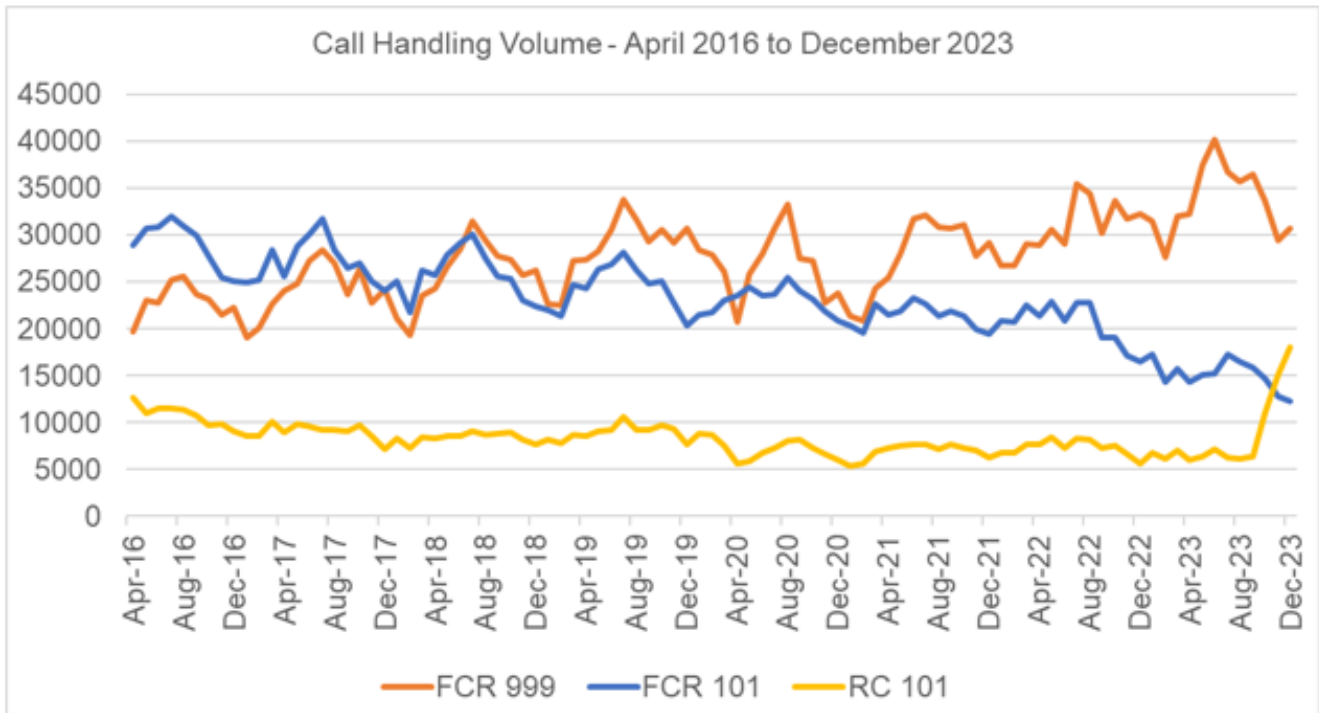


Figure 1 – Call Handling Volume

Figure 1 shows the calls taken in the Force Control Room (FCR) and the Resolution Centre (RC) between April 2016 and December 2023. It highlights the drop in 101 calls over the past 7 years in comparison to the increase in 999 calls over the same period. There is a clear seasonal pattern to 999 calls between 2016 and 2021, with spikes during the warmer summer months. Since 2021, this pattern has been disrupted, with less of a drop in the autumn and winter and then even greater increases during the summer months. June 2023 saw the highest volume of calls on record at 40,148 (this is linked to the Android issue referenced in the previous report). Non-Emergency FCR calls have decreased slowly since 2016, with a notable drop from August 2022 continuing through to December 2023.

In August 2023, call triage was trialled within the Resolution Centre to reduce the time it takes to answer 101 calls and to ensure that the caller is getting the service that they need. Due to the early indicators of success, since mid-November this is now being piloted to apply to all 101 calls, regardless of where they are received. This has shown a significant drop in FCR 101 calls and an increase in RC 101 calls this quarter. December 2023 has reached the highest RC 101 calls during this

whole period, reaching 18,097. This is reflected in the decrease in FCR 101 calls being at their lowest over the same period at only 12,273.

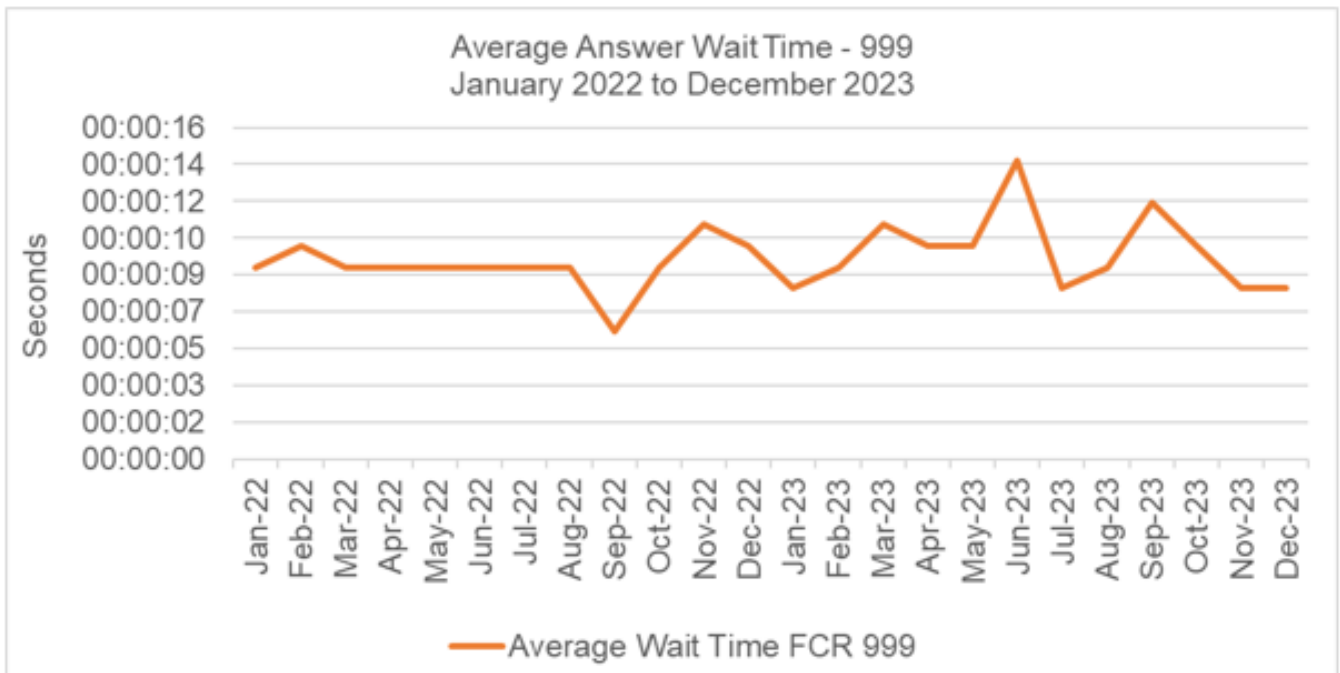


Figure 2- Average wait time FCR 999

The longest average wait time for FCR 999 calls between January 2022 and December 2023 was 14 seconds. The shortest average wait time in this period was 6 seconds in September 2022. The average time to answer a call has remained steady since January 2022 despite the large increase in 999 calls. Compared to the last quarter, there has been a drop in wait times since September 2023 by 2 seconds from 12 to 8 seconds shown in December 2023.

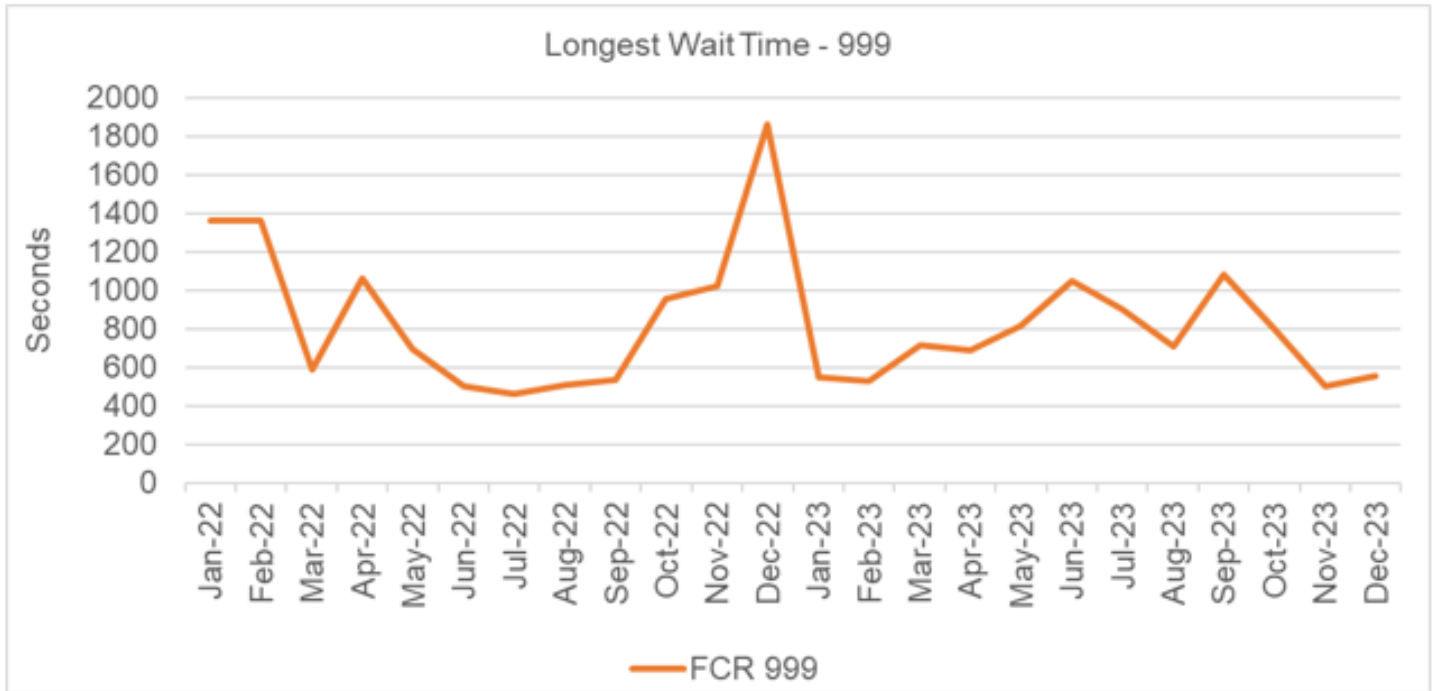


Figure 3- Longest wait time 999

The longest wait time for FCR 999 calls between January 2022 and December 2023 was December 2022, with an emergency call from another agency at 1,860 seconds (31 minutes). This call has been attributed to the ambulance service. There is a non-emergency line available, but this is currently underused. The command regularly meets with colleagues from the ambulance service to discuss and resolve issues. The lowest month in this period was July 2022 with 463 seconds (8 minutes).

There are three channels through which 999 calls are received; those from the public, those from partners and internal transfers. Priority is given to the public line, where most calls are answered within 10 seconds. In the year from April 2022 to March 2023, 83.9% were answered within 10 seconds. Therefore, the longest wait times for 999 calls are generated from the remaining two lines, which is a more controlled risk.

There is a drop in the longest wait times since the last quarter. November 2023 had the lowest in the last 3 months at 500 seconds (9 minutes) only slightly increasing in December 2023 to 553 seconds (10 minutes).

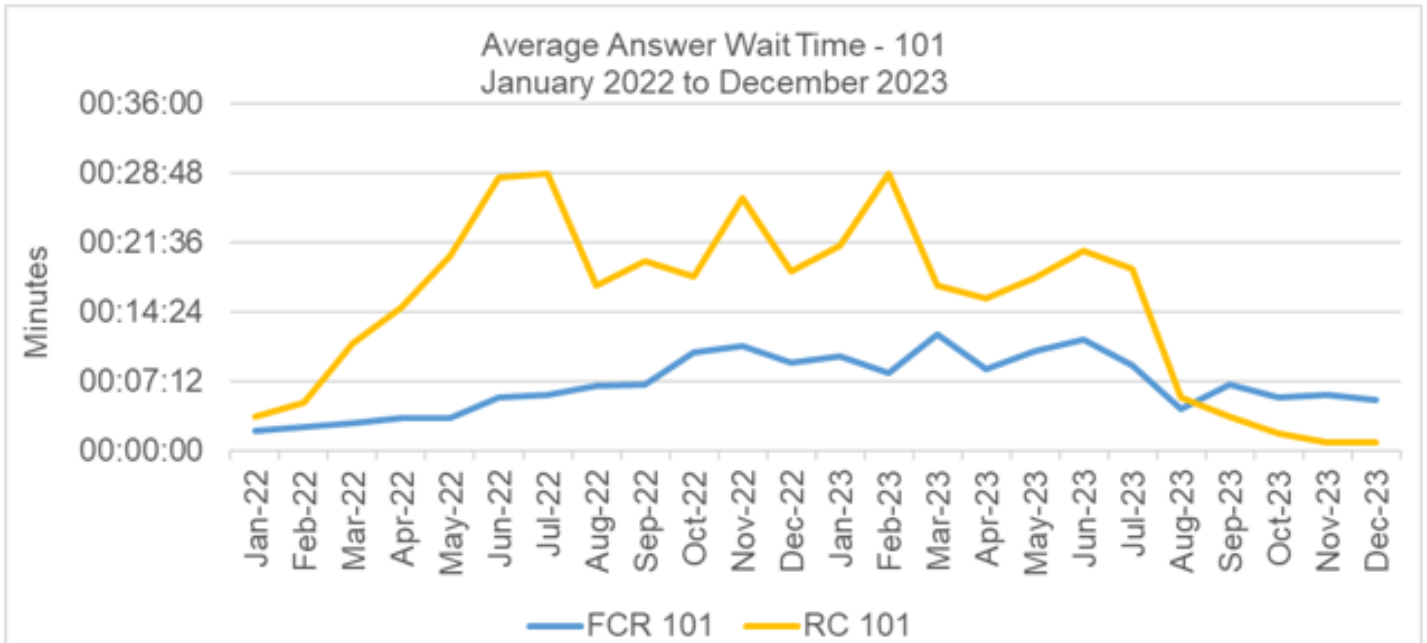


Figure 4- Average wait time 101

The longest average wait time for FCR 101 calls between January 2022 and December 2023 was 12 minutes 4 seconds, which occurred in March 2023. The shortest average wait time in this period was 2 minutes 2 seconds in January 2022. The average time to answer a call has remained steady since January 2022.

The longest average wait time for RC 101 calls between January 2022 and December 2023 was 28 minutes 43 seconds in February 2023. The shortest average wait time in this period was 46 seconds in December 2023. The average time to answer a call has seen a downward trend since the last quarter with December 2023 being the lowest over the whole period. This indicates the positive impact of the triage process.

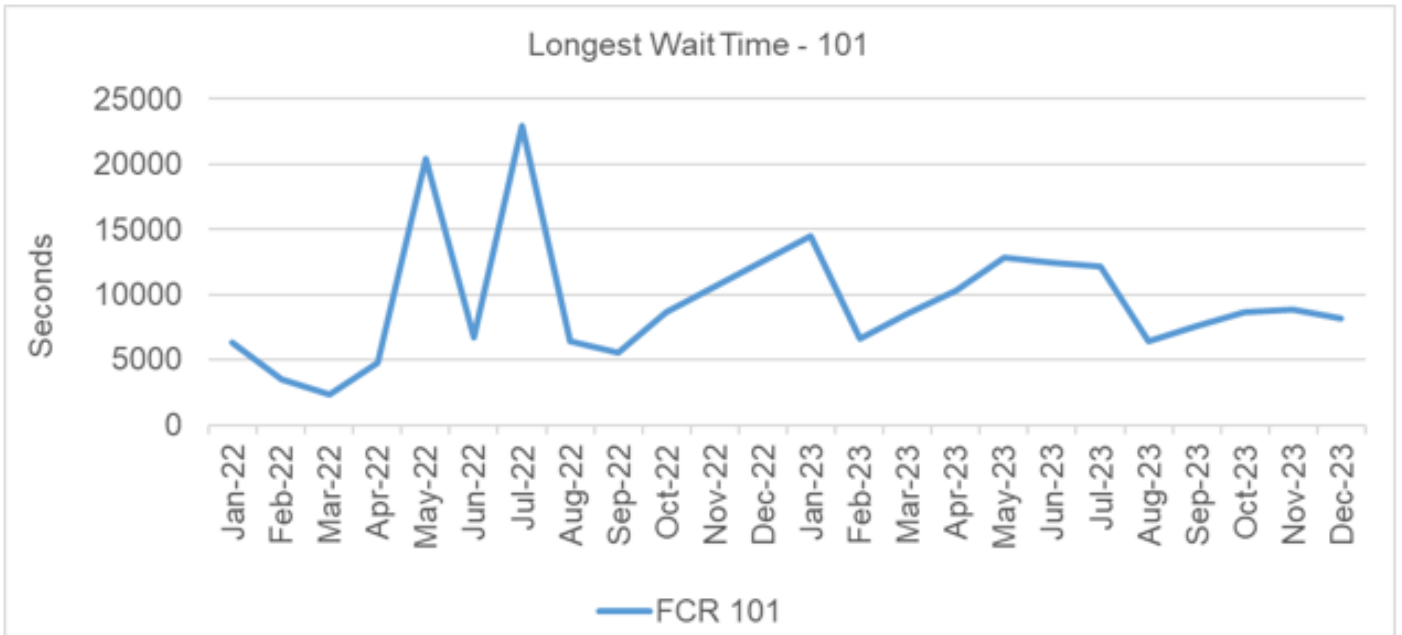


Figure 5- Longest wait time FCR 101

The longest wait time for 101 999 calls between January 2022 and December 2023 was in July 2022 with 2,2961 seconds (49 minutes). The lowest month in this period was March 2022 with 2,386 seconds (39 minutes). 101 wait times have remained steady since the last quarter only increasing by 557 seconds (10 minutes) since September 2023.

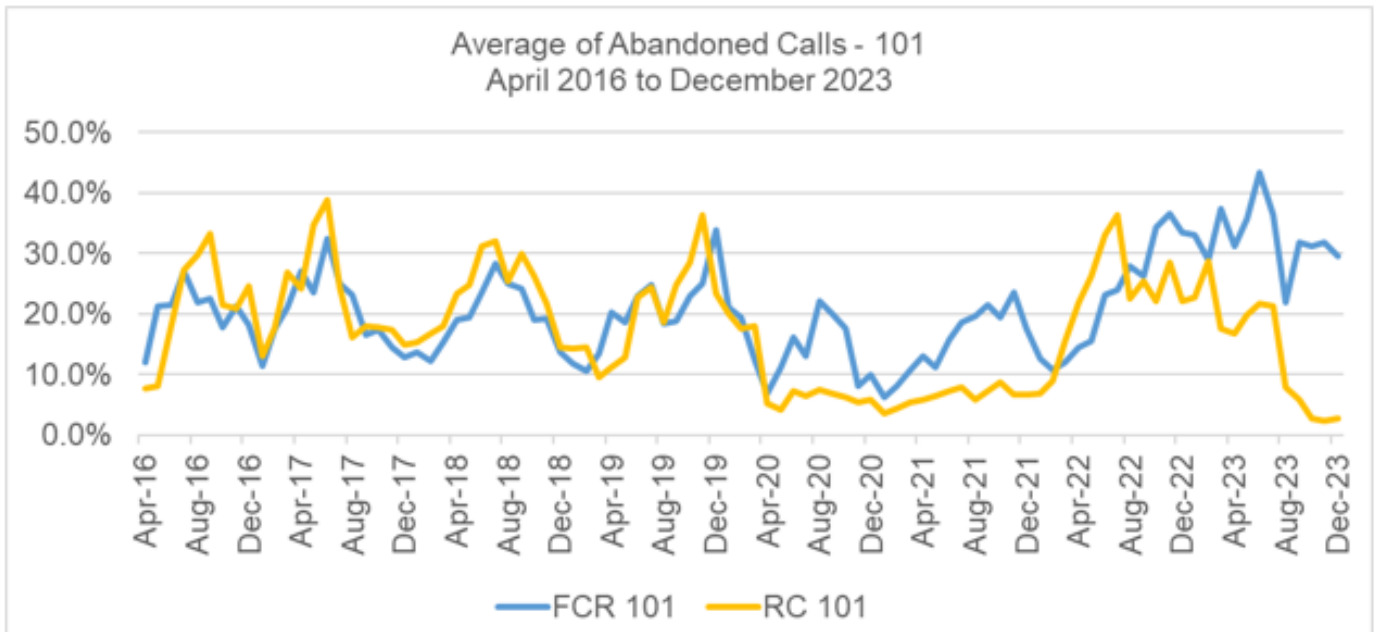


Figure 6- Abandoned Calls 101

Figure 6 shows calls terminated after they have reached the FCR or RC. Contact Management Command now has more detailed analysis that allows us to understand the different points in which a call may be abandoned, including during the IVR and at switchboard. During the last HMICFRS visit (October 23), the force agreed a definition of an abandoned call, as follows:

“An abandoned call is one which is abandoned by the caller due to the time they are waiting for the call to be answered by a live agent and are frustrated/dissatisfied with the contact service, or if the victim chooses for another reason”.

This means that the force may differentiate between positive channel shift and dissatisfaction with service. This has now resulted in a single 101 abandoned metric for the whole force handling of 101 calls and removes the channel shift data (calls abandoned after listening to IVR message). This shows that since the end of January, there is a force abandoned rate of between 4% and 15% with a month to date of 7.2% for 101 calls. This work has been recognised by HMICFRS and shared with the Contact National working group and 7F forces.

Work now continues to understand the reasons a caller may abandon a call. While cognisant of creating risk through unsolicited contacts with vulnerable victims when it may not be safe (for example, in a domestic abuse context) utilising the new ICCS IVR, it may be possible for a caller to opt out of future contact so that we can engage with 101 abandoned callers through BT SMS to establish the reason for their termination and strengthen our understanding.

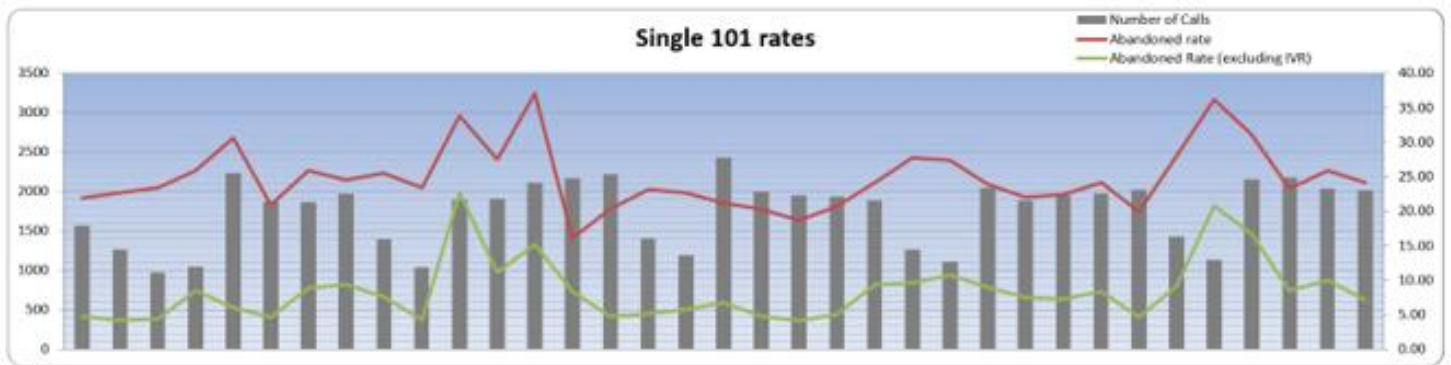


Figure 7 – Single 101 rates

Figure 7 is an indication of the single 101 metric from 29th January 2024.

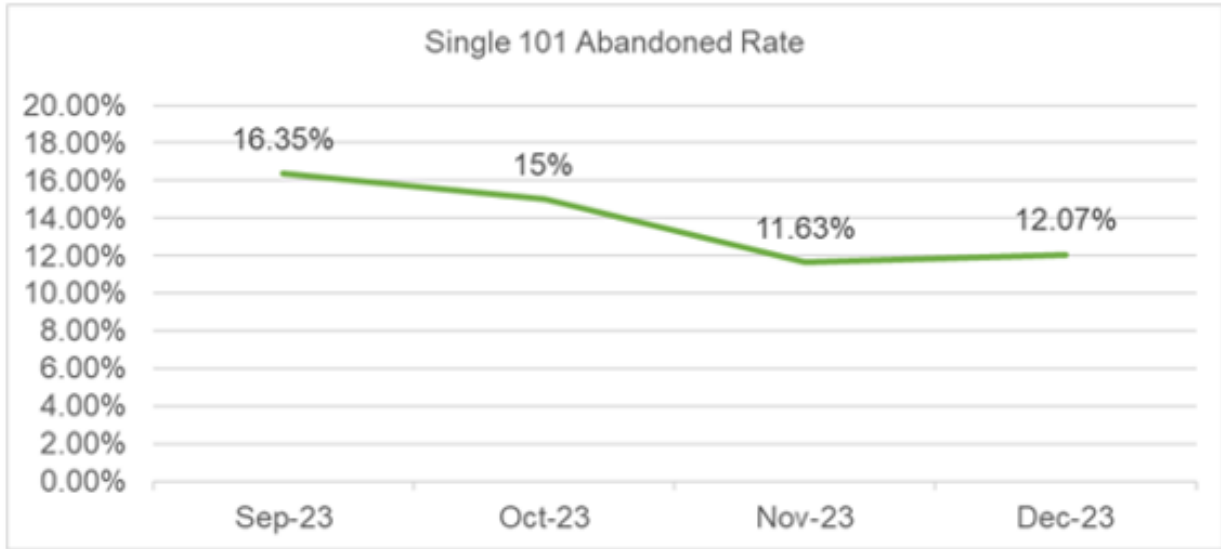


Figure 8 – Single 101 abandoned rate

Since September 2023, there has been a decrease in the abandonment rate from 16.35% to 12.07% in December 2023. A decrease of 4.28%pts.

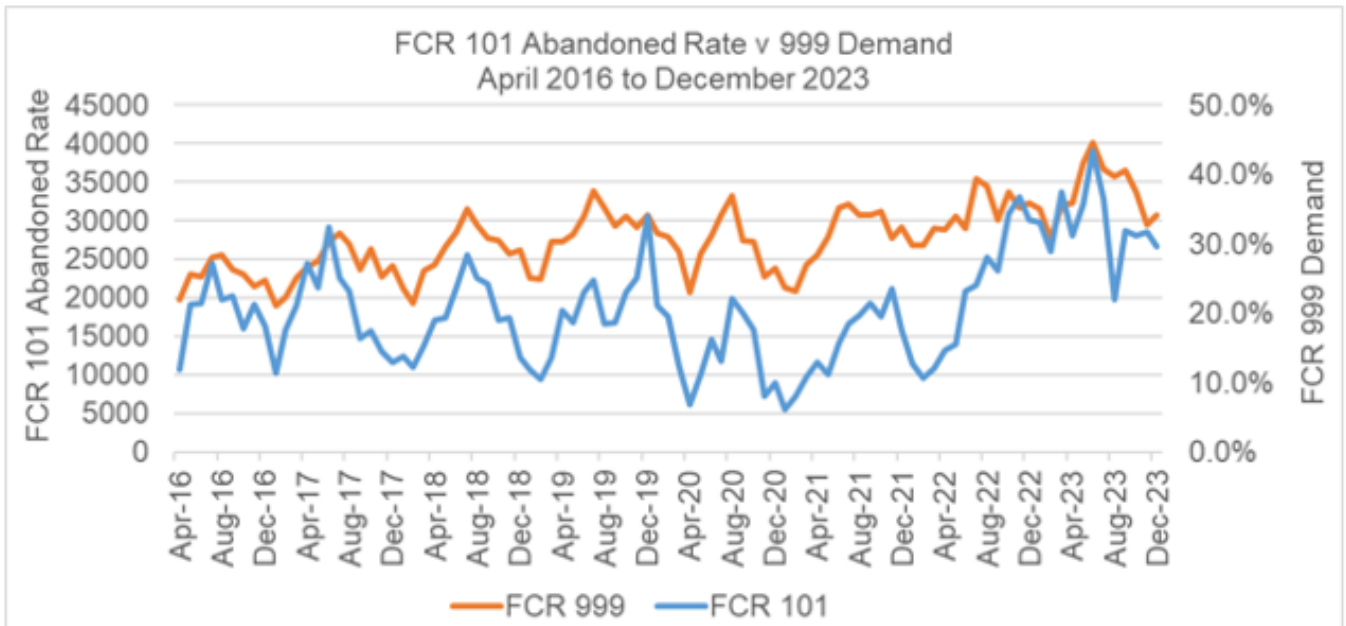


Figure 9 – FCR 101 abandoned vs 999 demand

Figure 9 shows the proportion of calls abandoned within the FCR, which during the Summer 2023 was at the highest rate since January 2020; the proportion of abandoned calls has been increasing since April 2022. The Resolution Centre also saw an increase in the proportion abandoned since 2022 following several years of less than 10% of calls being abandoned. Resolution Centre performance has

improved during 2023, with a drop below 10% of calls abandoned in August 2023 continuing through December 2023.

The chart shows the 101 abandoned rates when compared with the 999-call demand from 2016 to 2023. The 101 abandonment rate significantly dropped in March 2020 at the same time FCR demand increased. This pattern continued throughout 2020. The 2020 reduction is clearly attributable to the COVID pandemic. In June 2023, the abandonment rates increased, rising to the highest it has been in the 7 years at 40,148.

The FCR 101 abandonment rate also followed this trend of increasing since March 2022 rising to the highest it has been at 6620 (43.3%), showing the clear relationship between answering time and abandonment rate. October 2023 to December 2023 has remained steady for both abandoned rate and demand.

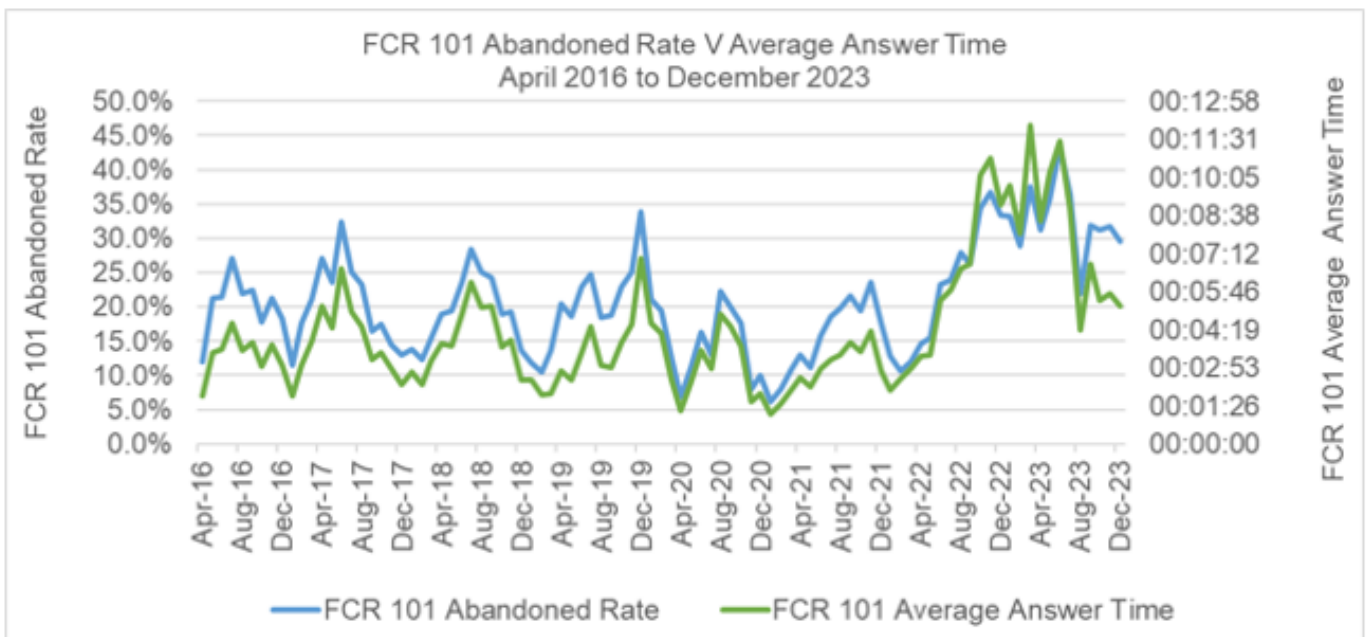


Figure 10 – FCR 101 abandoned rate compared to FCR 101 answer time

In March 2023, the average answer time and abandonment rate were the highest they have been in the last 7 years at 12 minutes 4 seconds wait time and 37.5% of all calls abandoned. This significantly dropped in August 2023 with a 4 minute 16 second wait time and 21.9% abandonment rate. This has continued to remain steady throughout the last quarter, December 2023 being the lowest since September 2023 at 5 minutes 12 seconds.

The time to answer an emergency 999 call is less than 10 seconds so abandoned calls are rare. A caller may change their mind, because the emergency necessitates them to hang up the phone for their safety or because they dialed in error. There is a defined process covered in policy that outlines the expectations of call takers in these circumstances.

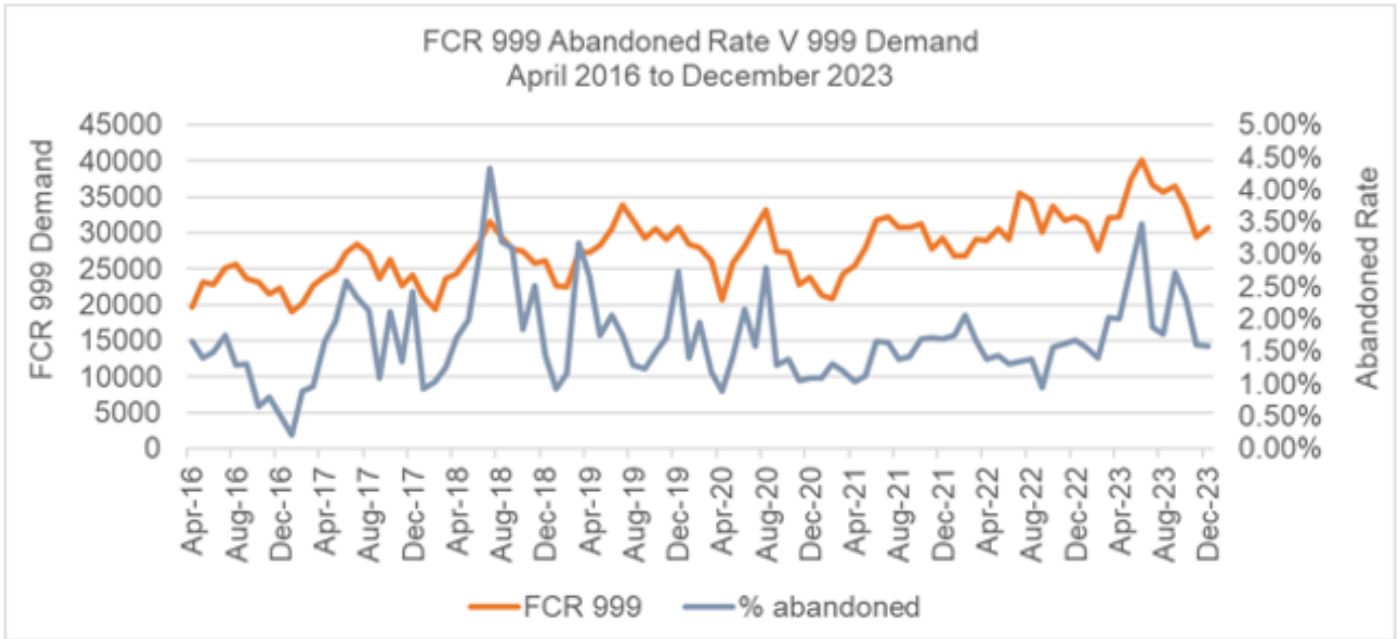


Figure 11 – FCR 999 abandoned rate v 999 demand

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, which was being addressed through Operation Analogy, which was described in the previous report. Operation Analogy has recently been discontinued as the command has introduced a call triage process on the 101 calls which prevents people representing on the 999 line, which has led to a significant reduction in call wait times and a reduction in the abandonment rate.

The 101 callers may abandon their call if the wait time is too long, or if it is inconvenient to hang on at that moment in time. The caller may have decided to report via another means (such as online) - this is considered a positive abandonment and indicative of successful channel shift. If the caller represents on 101 or even 999, this is clearly negative.

National Comparisons

Month	Position	Median answer time	Month	Position	Mean answer time
Jan-22	18th/44	6	Jan-22	25th/44	12.06
Feb-22	18th/44	6	Feb-22	12th/44	13.2
Mar-22	16th/44	6	Mar-22	17th/44	11.9
Apr-22	16th/44	6	Apr-22	19th/44	11.9
May-22	16th/44	6	May-22	18th/44	12.1
Jun-22	19th/44	6	Jun-22	17th/44	11.7
Jul-22	18th/44	6	Jul-22	11th/44	11.4
Aug-22	21st/44	6	Aug-22	16th/44	12
Sep-22	21st/44	6	Sep-22	11th/44	9.6
Oct-22	22nd/44	6	Oct-22	20th/44	11.7
Nov-22	22nd/44	6	Nov-22	28th/44	13.7
Dec-22	23rd/44	6	Dec-22	25th/44	11.9
Jan-23	25th/44	6	Jan-23	28th/44	11.08
Feb-23	26th/44	6	Feb-23	26th/44	11.79
Mar-23	24th/44	6	Mar-23	28th/44	14.26
Apr-23	24th/44	6	Apr-23	29th/44	13.23
May-23	25th/44	6	May-23	28th/44	13.54
Jun-23	22nd/44	6	Jun-23	32nd/44	16.54
Jul-23	22nd/44	6	Jul-23	18th/44	11.67
Aug-23	23rd/44	6	Aug-23	25th/44	12.06
Sep-23	23rd/44	6	Sep-23	32nd/44	11.11
Oct-23	26th/44	6	Oct-23	31st/44	13.03
Nov-23	29th/44	6	Nov-23	32nd/44	11.11
Dec-23	Not available		Dec-23	Not available	

Figure 12 – 999 performance data, national position

Essex answering time for 999 calls, based on median, is 6 seconds in every month. Any change in national position is based on the performance of other forces. The national guidance asks for calls to be answered in under 10 seconds, median answer time is a more reliable measure for time-based performance data that can be skewed by outliers (extremely long or short calls which are not usual).

Live Chat and Single Online Home

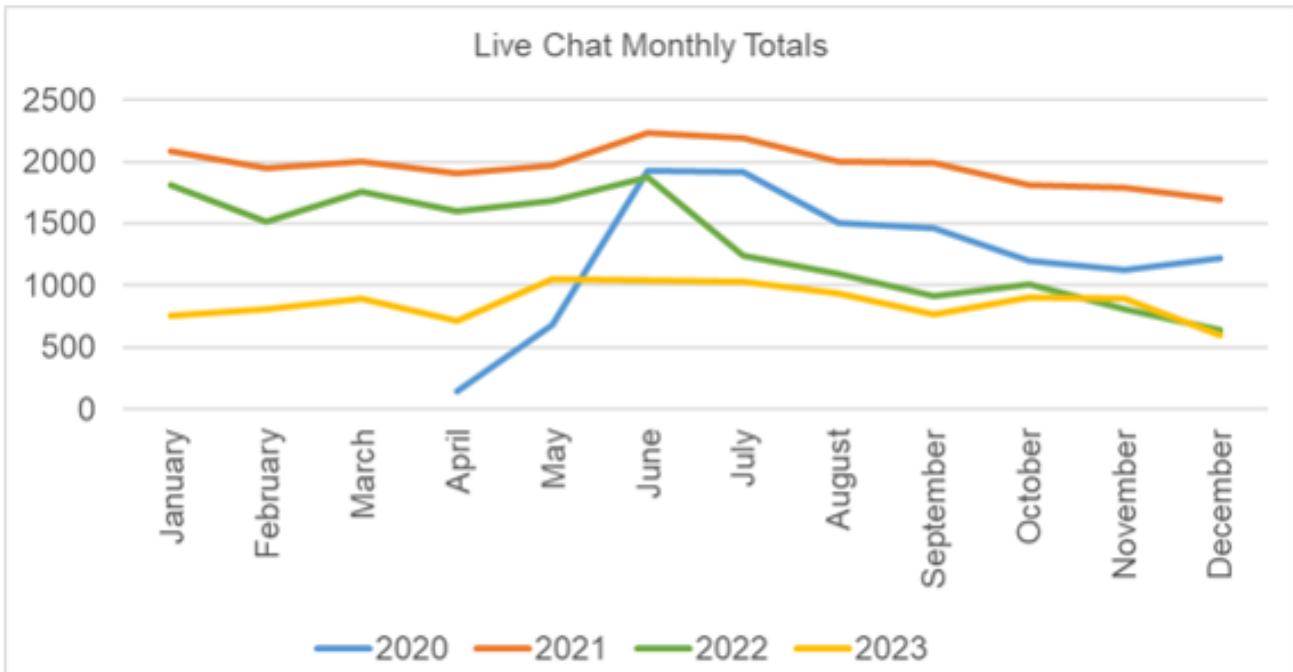


Figure 13 – Live chat volumes

As an alternative to phoning, Essex Police has a ‘Live Chat’ option for the public to make contact. This is an instant messaging conversation held with a call handler. The service was introduced in May 2020.

The highest volume of chats came during the COVID-19 pandemic during which several call handlers worked from home on Live Chat as they could not answer calls. The peak within the 4 years was 2238 chats in June 2021.

The year 2023 has seen the lowest overall volume of chats, with December 2023 reaching only 603. The decline started in June 2022 and has been declining since. In July 2022, Essex Police reduced the hours from 0700 - 2300 Monday to Sunday (excluding bank holidays) down to Monday to Friday 1000-2100hrs (excluding bank holidays). This accounts for the reduction in use, but this will be reviewed as part of the Target Operating Model as resilience and capacity within the Contact Centre increases.

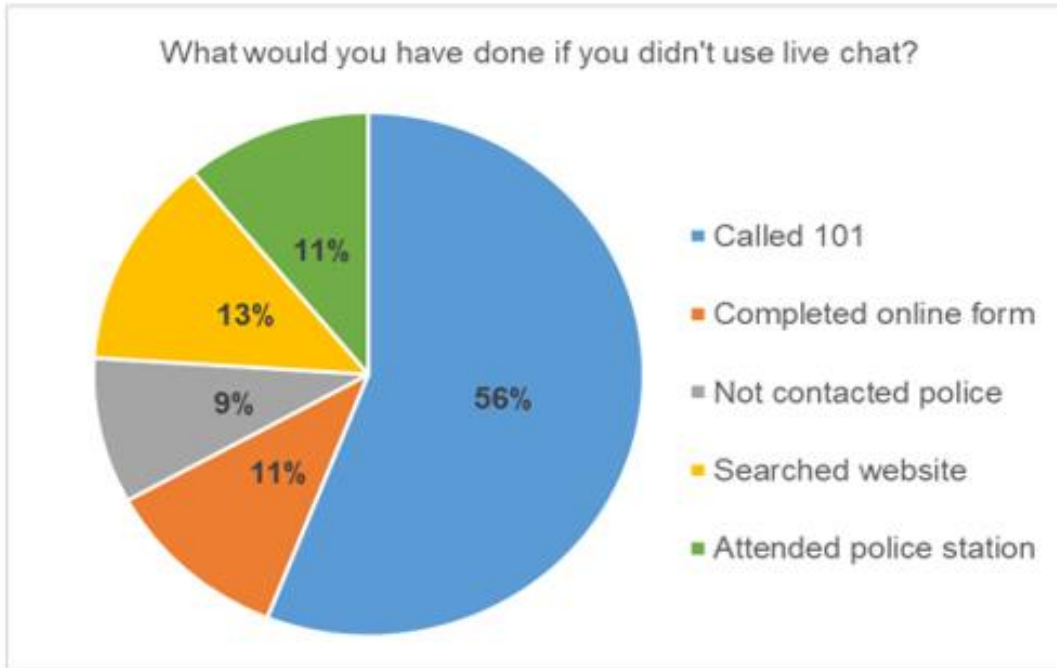


Figure 14 – Live chat survey

Essex Police has committed to the option of the public contacting the force via the Essex Police website which uses the nationally enabled “Single Online Home” (SOH) format. It creates an option for the public to report crimes and other matters online. The service was introduced in September 2019 as an alternative for the public to calling either 101 or 999.

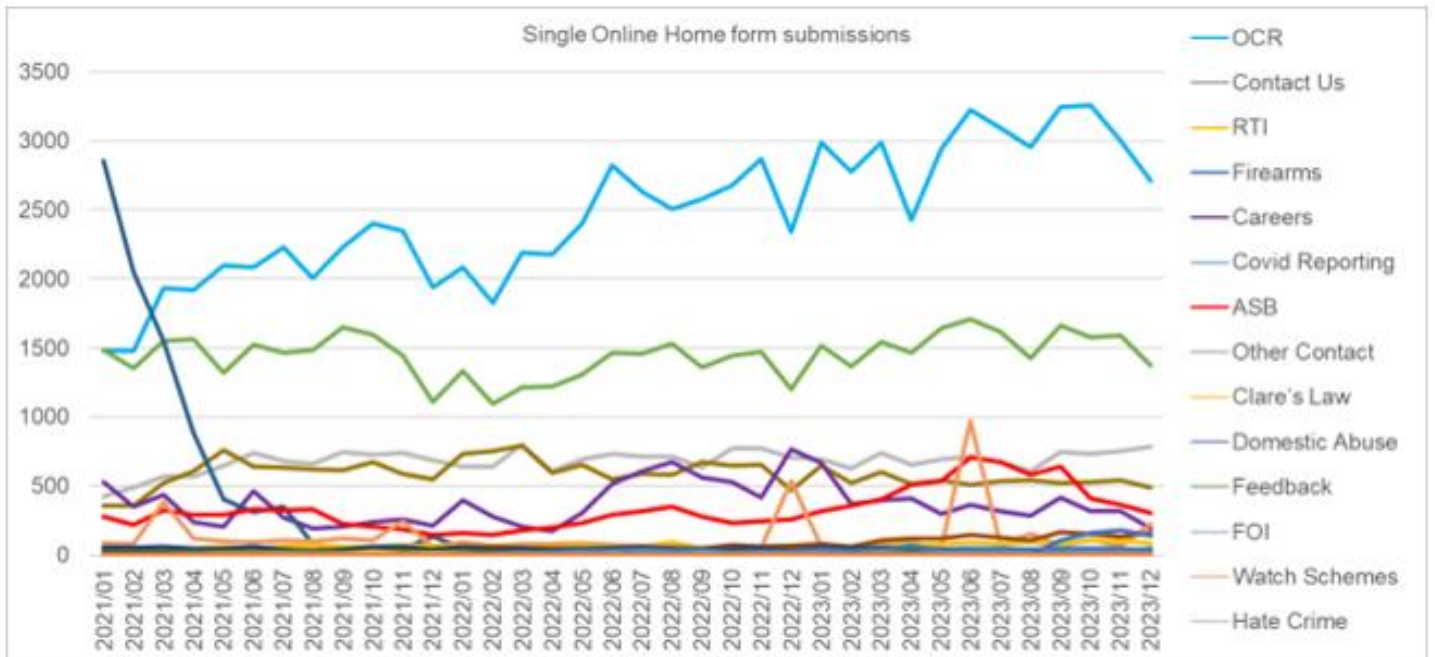


Figure 15 – Single Online Home forms submission

'How long do you think is acceptable to get through to a call handler when using the 101 non-emergency number?'

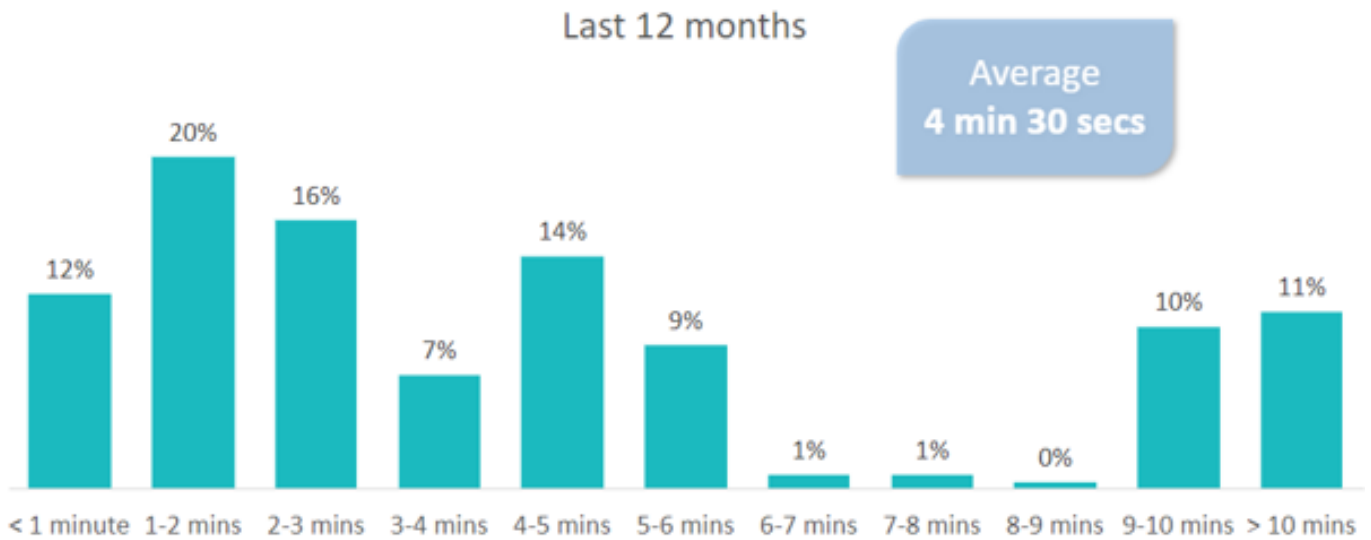


Figure 16 – Public survey on acceptable time to get through to a call handler

The survey also asks how aware the public are that they can access some of Essex Police's services online; this shows that six out of ten people were aware of the availability of online services.

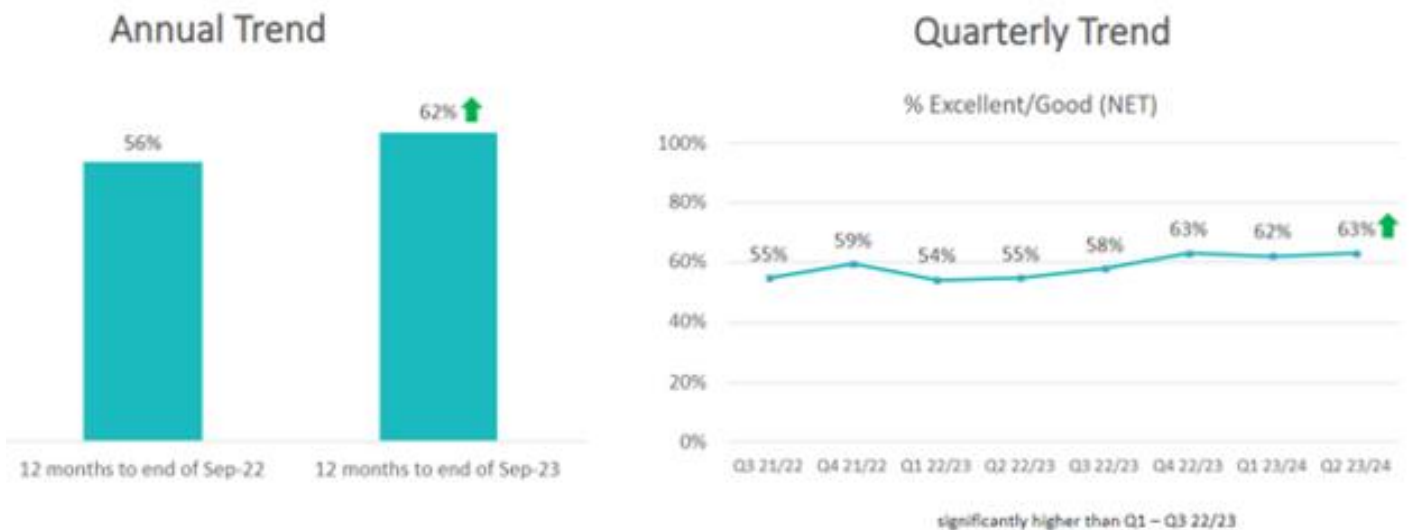


Figure 17 – Public survey on Essex Police's online services

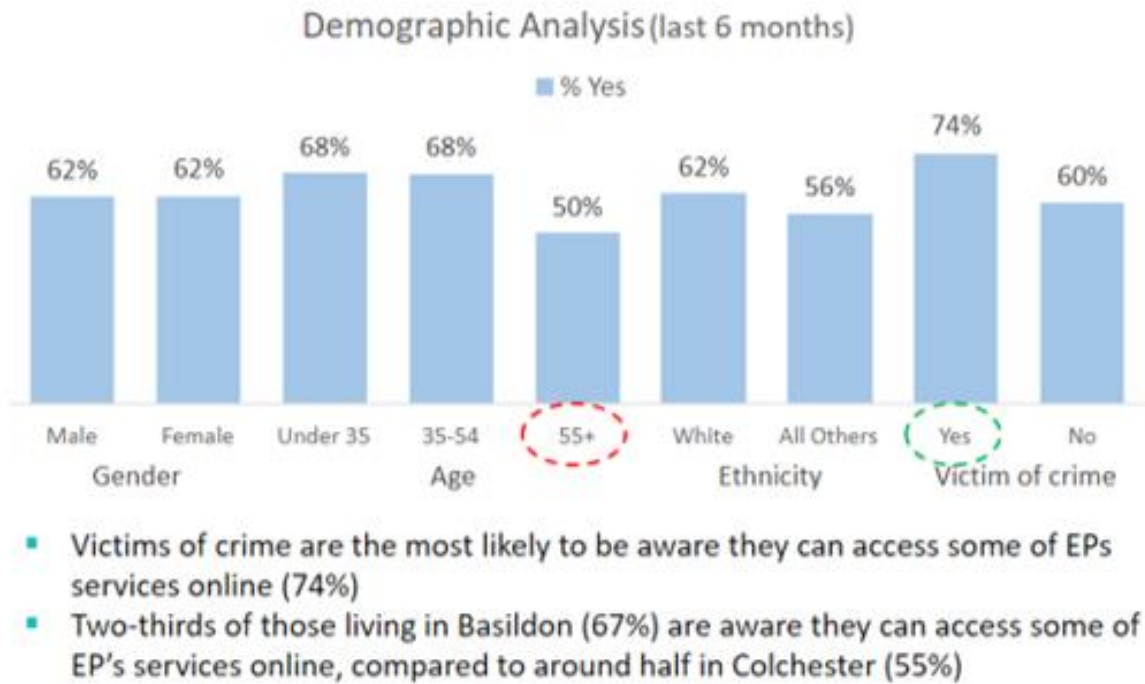


Figure 18 – Public survey on Essex Police’s online services

Increasing awareness of online services is important to provide the public with a range of contact options for non-urgent matters and to help reduce some demand on the call centres in Essex Police. Recent analysis tells us that the patience times of callers is on average over five minutes before they will abandon, which is positive insofar as it is outside the five-minute maximum target time the force seeks to achieve. Where data reflects differing levels of engagement across the county, this will be addressed through the Public Contact Gold Group where relevant commands with community links are represented.

Rapid Video Response (RVR) performance

Essex Police introduced Rapid Video Response in March 2023 as an alternative method for responding to domestic abuse incidents of a lower response priority. Evidence from other forces shows that RVR can provide a better experience for victims and a quicker response leading to greater victim support for the investigation.

The nine months prior to the introduction of RVR were compared to the nine months post implementation. The data showed a reduction in average time to attend Appointment, Priority and Scheduled Domestic Abuse incidents.

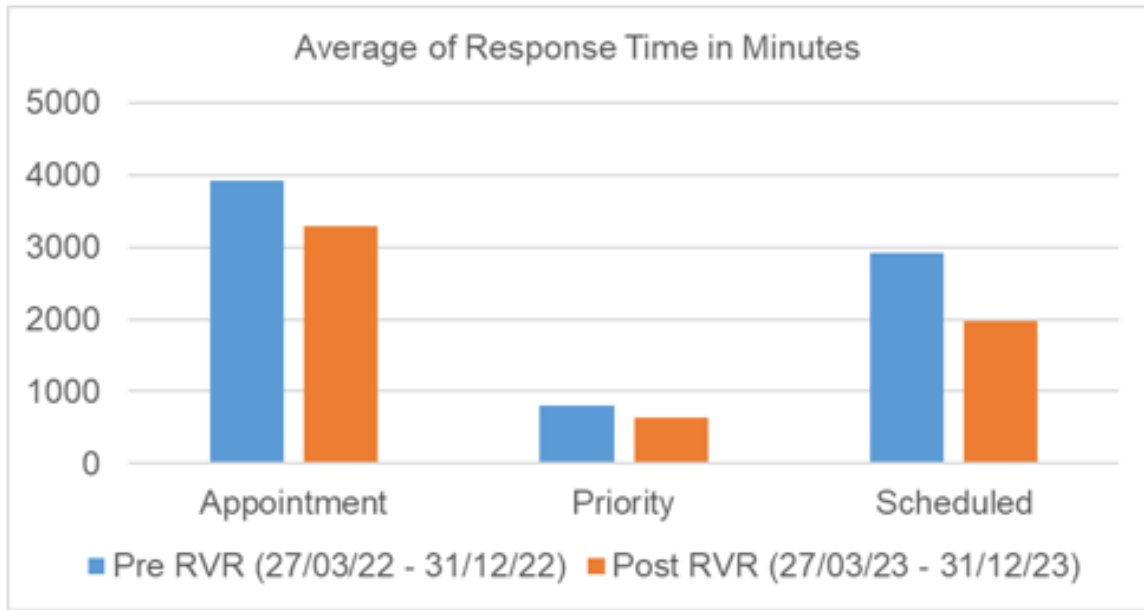


Figure 19 – Average of response time in minutes

The average time spent dealing with an incident at scene (or via RVR) has also showed a decrease for Appointment, Priority and Scheduled incidents in the nine months post the RVR implementation.

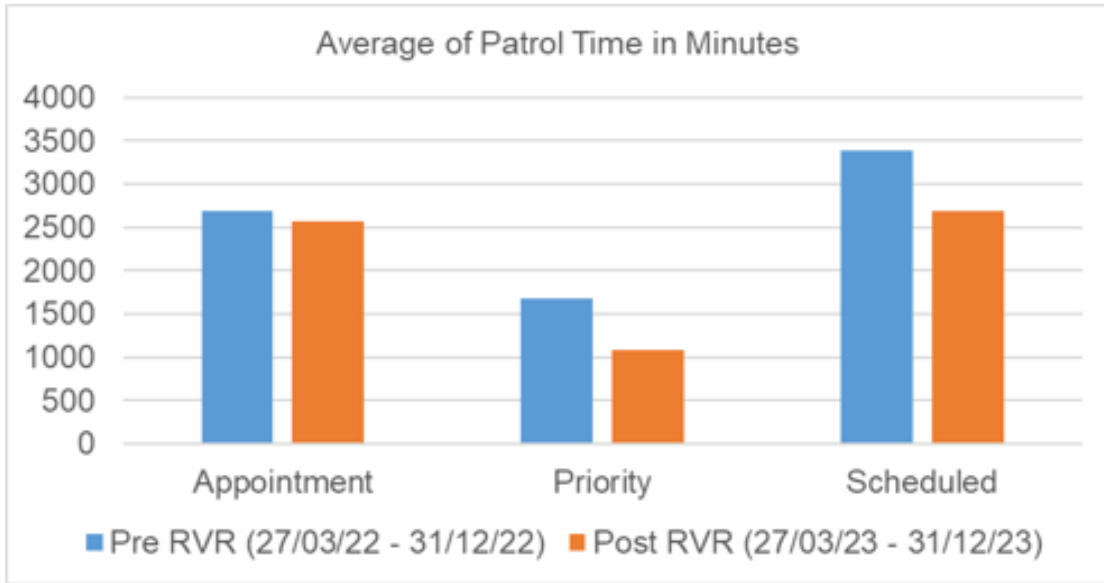


Figure 20 – Average of patrol time in minutes

The average length of time an incident is open (time active) decreased for Appointment, Priority and Scheduled incidents since RVR implementation. This has improved since the last quarter where the average of time at incidents for Appointments post RVR was higher than pre RVR. This has shown a positive change and impact.

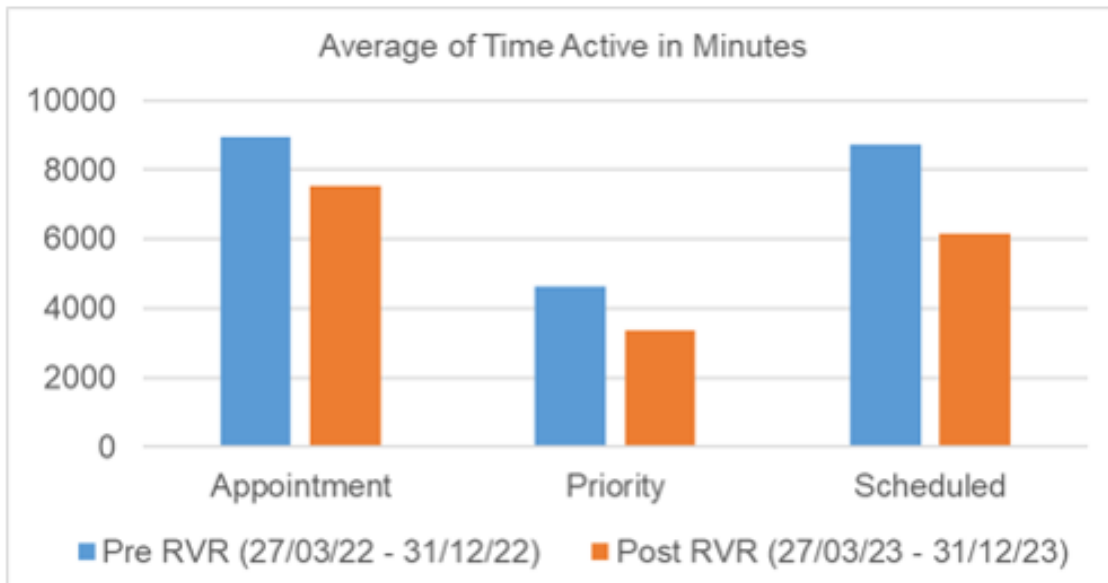


Figure 21 – Average time active in minutes

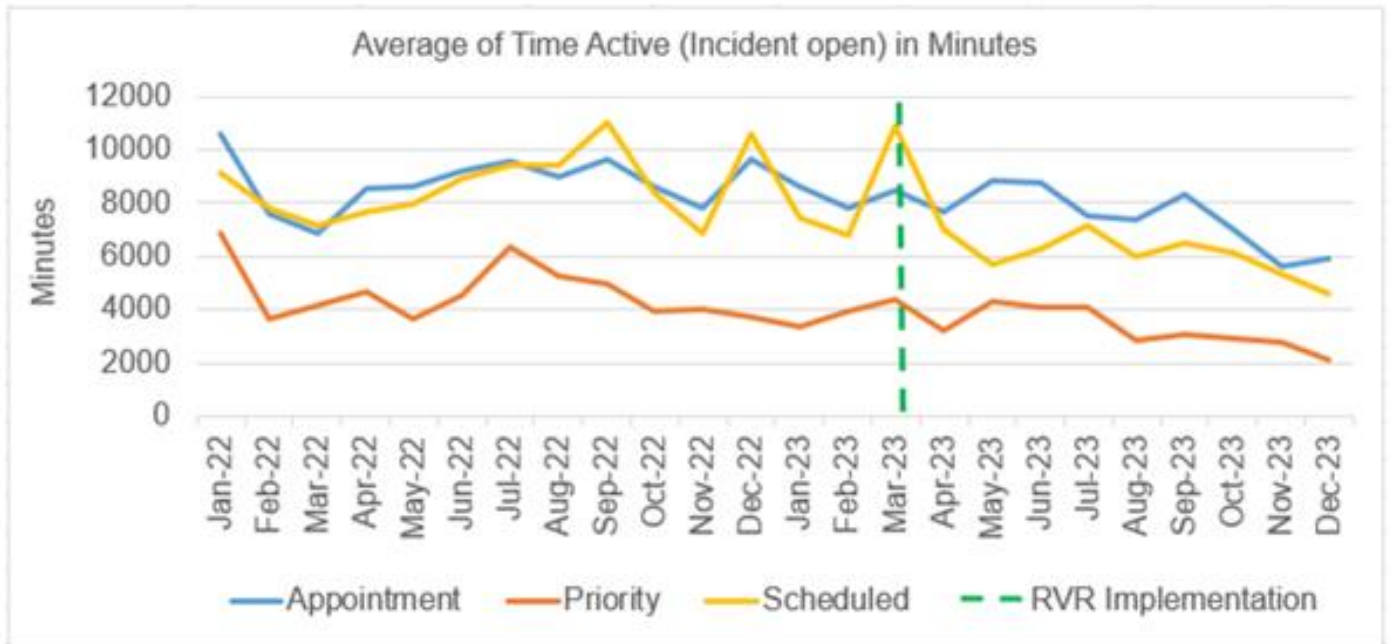


Figure 22 – Average of time active in minutes over time

This early trend data suggests that RVR has been beneficial in terms of a reduction in time spent responding to lower priority DA incidents with the biggest improvement for Scheduled incidents overall. The post implementation review will scope the benefits and risks associated with exploring wider use of RVR for a wider range of incident types. There will be a keen focus on ensuring performance is tracked right through from initial contact to the outcome of an investigation, through collaborative governance processes with cross-command input from all relevant commands, but especially investigation teams.

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 is represented at the Operation 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

In the 24 months to December 2023, there were 6,653 residential burglary offences (which fall within a defined category of High Harm (HH) incidents); 88.4% were attended. For Domestic Abuse, there was a total of 65,873 HH incidents, 91.2% were attended. For Other Sexual, there were 8,289 HH incidents, 58.4% were attended. For Rape, there was a total of 3,558 HH incidents, 43.5% of these were

attended. For Robbery, there were 1,843 HH incidents, 74.4% of these were attended. For Violence against the person with Injury, there were 25,587 HH incidents and 60.9% of these were attended.

This may appear concerning; however, it is important to note that the data reported relates to whether a unit was dispatched and attended while there was an active incident on the command-and-control system called STORM. The expectations are clearly defined that an incident should remain open for no longer than is necessary to manage the initial response. At the point a crime is disclosed, reported, or identified, a crime investigation should be recorded on a different recording system called Athena. This will then be allocated to the most appropriate resource to progress the investigation, which in most instances will necessitate the attendance of a police officer or civilian investigator to see the victim and obtain their evidential account. Especially in the case of High Harm offences, it will often be evident from the point of first contact that there is an offence to record, in which case this process will be followed.

There may be other reasons why an incident initially classified as a high harm offence may subsequently not be attended. The most frequently occurring would be where the incident categorisation changes from the original classification. For example, a person may report that they have been burgled which would be recorded as an incident, but the informant may then call back and explain that they were unaware that another occupant had forgotten their keys and had forced entry. Victim preference will also be taken into consideration.

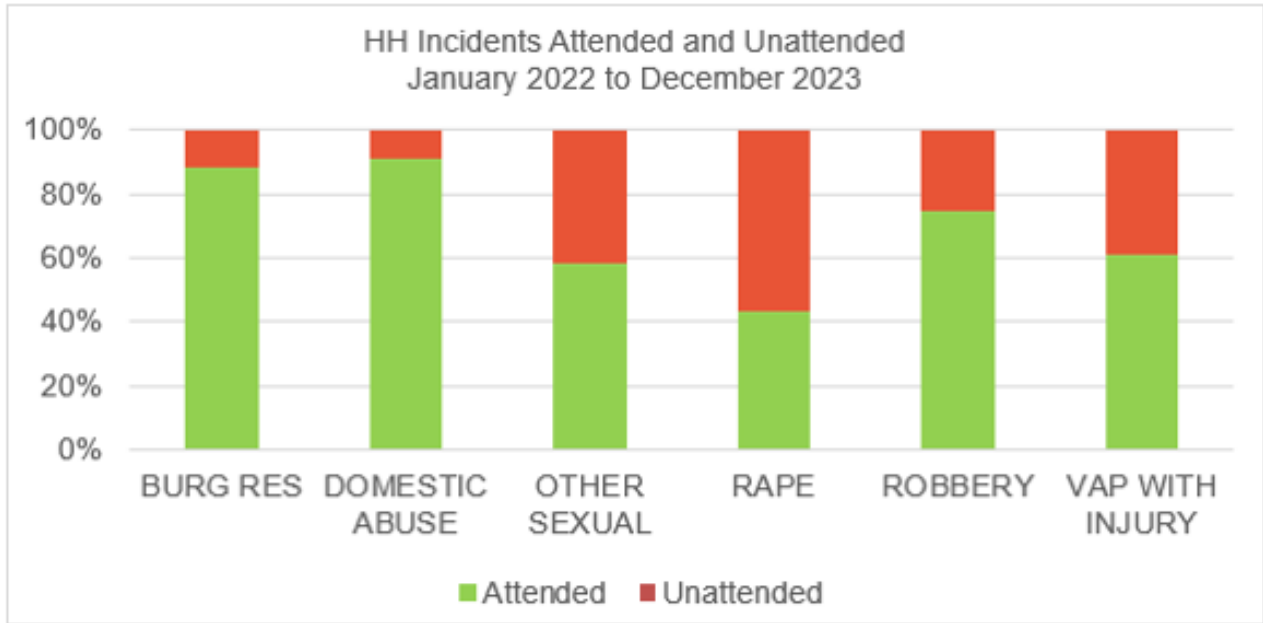


Figure 23 – HH incidents attended and unattended

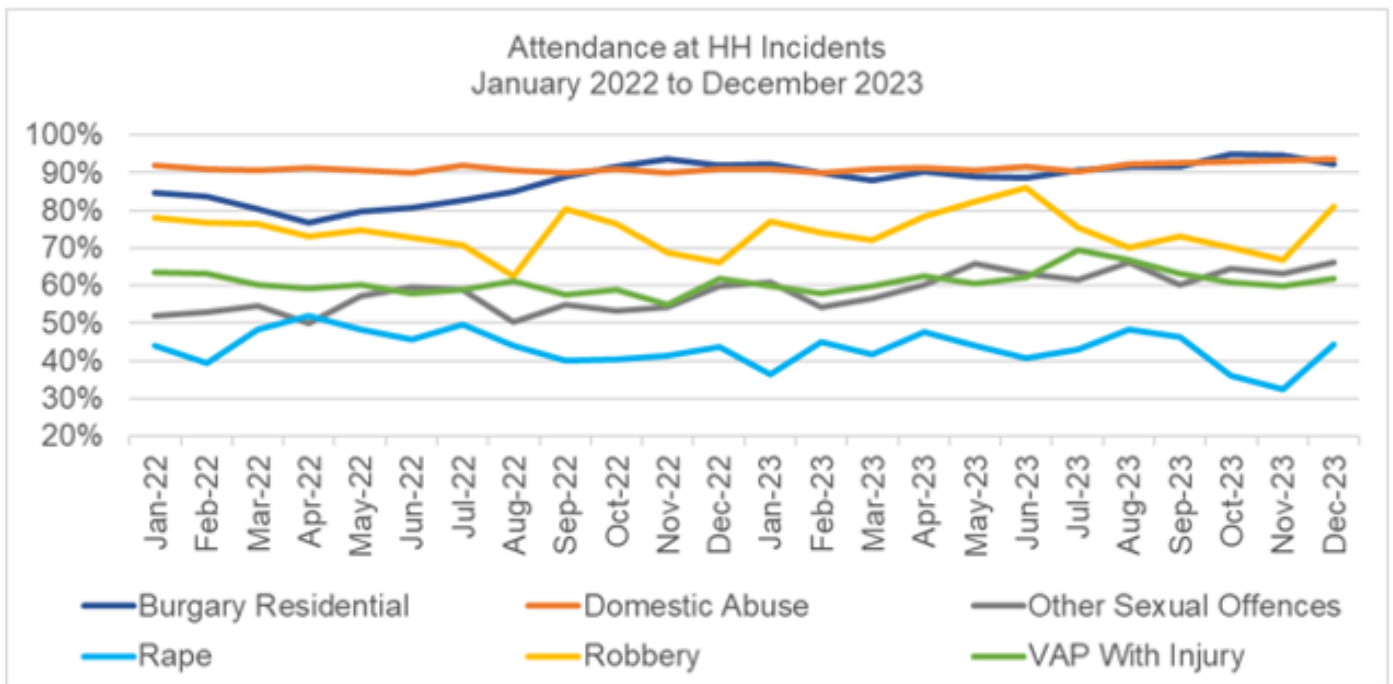


Figure 24 – Attendance at HH incidents

Figure 24 shows that attendance is generally stable at most high harm incident types since January 2022. Attendance at burglary incidents has increased since the pledge to attend all dwelling burglary was made in October 2022.

The proportion of emergency high harm incidents for which the response target was met reflects the overall emergency response rate. There is a gradual fall over time with a larger decrease at the end of the period. In December 2023, 72.51% were met. This is an increase of 3.91%pts compared to September 2023 when 68.6% were responded to within the target 15 or 20 minutes.

In December 2022, 71.62% were met; December 2023 had an increase of 0.89%pts.

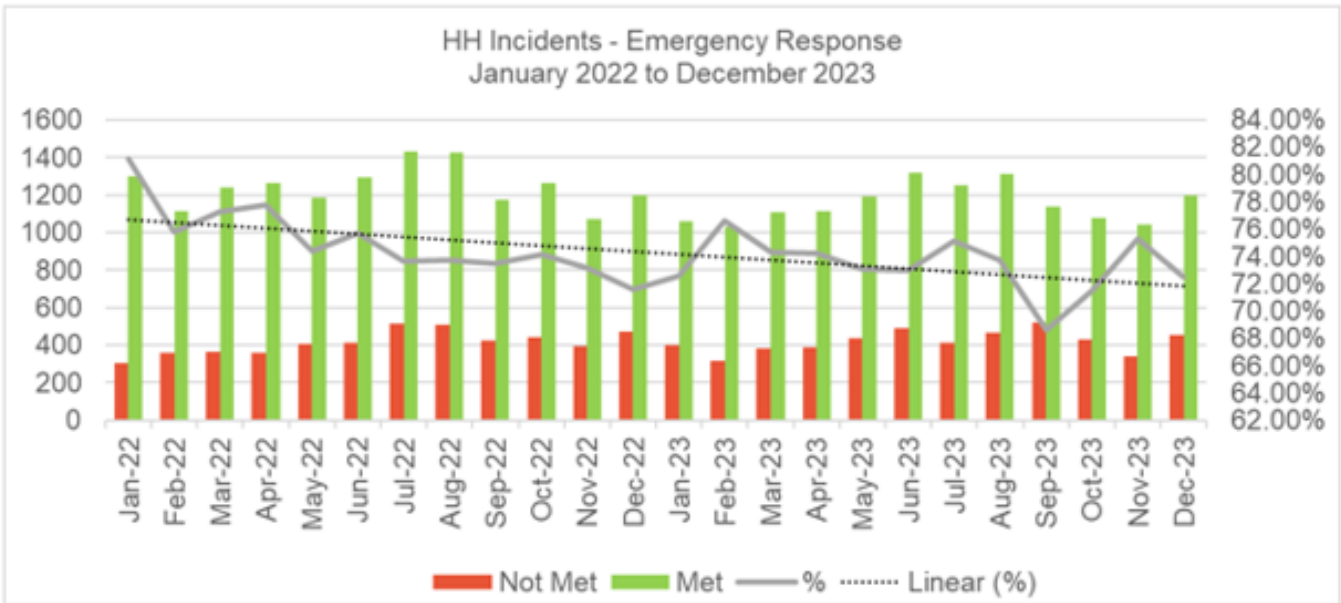


Figure 25 – HH incidents – Emergency response

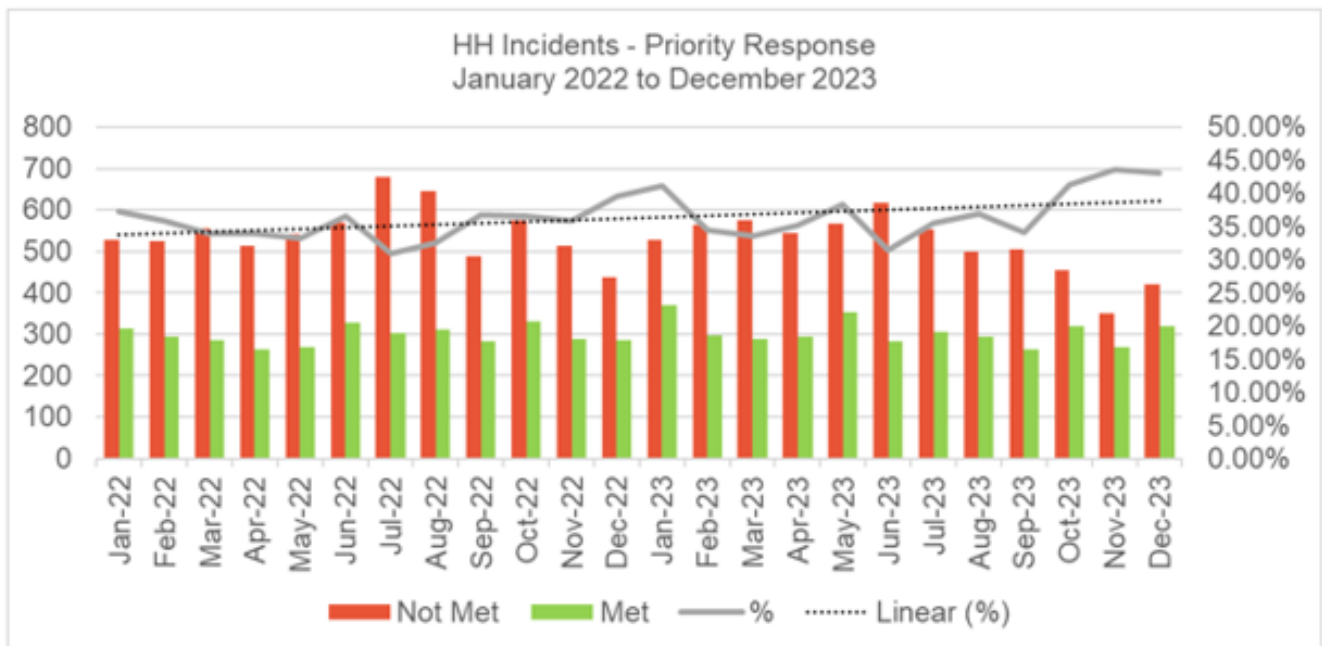


Figure 26 – HH incidents – Priority response

October 2023 to December 2023 saw a decrease in the volume of priority incidents. The overall percentage met increased from 34.11% in September 2023 to 43.03% in December 2023, amounting to an 8.92%pts increase.

The current response performance is a concern for the force and there is a clear commitment across all relevant commands that improvements must be made. There is a clear focus on ensuring time is invested only in incidents that police are the most appropriate resource to manage.

The concept of 'Right Care, Right Person' (RCRP) is being adopted by police forces nationally. The intention is to create capacity within policing while ensuring the right response from the right agency for people in need. Historically, policing has committed a significant amount of time and resource to mental health incidents, and other matters that are better suited to other statutory partners to deal. The expectation is that unless a person is at immediate risk of serious harm, police will not be the most appropriate agency to attend. A large proportion of staff in Contact Management Command and Local policing have been trained in RCRP principles, and a call script has been developed to guide call takers through a series of questions to help them to determine whether a policing resource is required. Data is produced to audit the use of the script, with development and support being provided while the process embeds. Since the introduction of RCRP, there has been a significant reduction in the number of concerns for welfare related incidents created, and subsequently the volume that are dispatched to.

Between October and December 2023, there was an overall reduction of 42.16% less calls attended, compared to the same period the year before. This equates to 1,665 fewer incidents that officers attended. Research was carried out to identify an estimated average time spent on concern for welfare incidents based on a 24hr dip sample. This showed that on an average day, a concern for welfare incident averaged approximately 2hrs and 45 minutes. When taking this into consideration, this would indicate that the reduction in attendance to concern for welfare calls equate to a saving of approximately 1,526 officer hours a month, with a non-cashable savings estimate of £33,679 per month.

The consequence is that the reduction in incidents creates capacity for both the dispatchers within Contact Management, and deployable resources in Local Policing Teams, which inevitably will impact positively on response times.

To further support activity, the force has invested in more driving courses for officers, ensuring that across the force this is an increased capability of drivers able to respond under response conditions; this is especially important in the larger rural parts of the county, where response times often suffer.

In the reporting period, several dispatch vacancies have been filled within Contact Management, ensuring robust tasking and allocation to incidents. In addition, when the TOM goes live, staff will have an omnicompetent skill set, providing further resilience.

Contact Management and other commands are working closely together to develop plans and progress activity to achieve improvements in this essential area. There is a weekly meeting to deconflict any issues and generate innovative ideas. Staff have been encouraged to spend time in the FCR to understand how the systems and processes work, so staff are better equipped to maximise the efficiency of our processes. This includes simple examples such as the status code an officer books onto the system with, which reflects whether they are available to deploy. A coaching programme for dispatchers will be reinvigorated as part of the TOM development.

6.0 Implications (Issues)

Following the 2021/22 HMICFRS PEEL inspection, the command was given four formal areas for improvement, which reflected the findings of our self-assessment. One of these has subsequently been discharged. Further detail is provided in section 8. The direction of travel for the remaining AFIs is positive and the improvements were noted in the most recent STAR chamber, chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable in December. Nonetheless, three remain and work continues to deliver improvements to ensure the best possible service is being delivered. Implementation of the TOM will support this work, and noting the improvements already made within the existing model, it is still anticipated that these will be discharged at the point of the next full PEEL inspection in 2024/25.

The force has invested significantly to enable the delivery of the TOM and the new Workforce Management Solution (anticipated for delivery in the summer), however within 12 months the model will be required to be cost neutral, placing a significant responsibility on the command to identify savings and efficiencies moving forward. The Strategic Change Project team are working closely with the command to identify options but may include future reductions in the overall establishment.

6.1 Links to Police and Crime Plan Priorities

The service provided by the Contact Management Command has not altered in the reporting period. The Command is the first point of contact for the public and partners in most circumstances and as such, has influence across all elements of the plan. In particular:

- **Investment in crime prevention-** as noted in section 4.0, the command previously had an AFI in relation to offering crime prevention advice, which has now been discharged. This has been achieved by bulk text messaging in addition to verbal advice, which is monitored through performance data, to ensure a consistent service in all relevant cases.
- **Protecting vulnerable people and breaking the cycle of domestic abuse-** the command continues to upskill staff to provide a better service to victims. Most officers in the recently implemented Rapid Video Response team (RVR) have completed a Domestic Abuse Specialist Investigators (DASI) course to hone their expertise in that specialist area. The command is reviewing all training course material ahead of the launch of the TOM, and all staff are trained in THRIVE which assesses vulnerability.
- **Improving support for victims of crime-** the command completes various surveys and quality assurance checks to ensure a quality service is provided. There is a Learning the Lessons board to ensure we are reflective and foster a growth mindset.
- **Protecting rural and isolated areas-** the command is working closely with Local Policing Commands to improve response times to emergency and non-emergency incidents. Swifter response is likely to lead to enhanced victim satisfaction and better investigative opportunities.
- **Supporting officers and staff-** the command is proactive in progressing activity to support staff, including reward and recognition processes, robust attendance management, and ongoing consideration of staff parity.

The TOM takes account of the PFCC's plan, the Contact Management Strategy and the Force plan, and will build great efficiency and effectiveness into the service provided to the people of Essex.

6.2 Demand

A detailed analysis of demand and performance is documented in section 5. Key points are summarised below:

- There has been a steady increase in 999 calls over time, but Essex is not an outlier when compared with other forces nationally
- 101 calls have been steadily decreasing over time
- The volume of live chats is decreasing (attributable to the current operating hours of this service)
- The volume of SOH reports is increasing
- There are clear correlations between the volume of demand and performance

6.3 Risks/Mitigation

The command currently has one strategic risk and three management risks. All have several mitigating actions in progress and the risk levels are reducing.

Strategic risk 2738- Managing public contact and calls for service effectively to maintain public confidence in policing- the risk score has reduced in the reporting period. There is sound progress against all mitigating actions. Cross-command work is supported through the Deputy Chief Constable's Public Contact Gold Group and ACC Nolan's Call Handling Gold Group. Additional governance is provided via the Contact Management Programme Board.

Additional risks include instability as the TOM embeds and while new and inexperienced staff learn the business. In addition, the command will need to make significant savings in the following 12 months which may require changes to the establishment.

6.4 Equality and/or Human Rights Implications

There are no identified concerns. The command is cognisant of the responsibilities under the Victim's Bill 2023 which governs the force's delivery under the Victim's Code of Practice. The command proactively seeks opportunities to ensure we are accessible to all communities. A recent example includes the roll out of British Sign Language for 999 in the summer. There is an ongoing technology review for the command which will scope onward opportunities, including an equivalent service for 101.

Work continues as identified in the previous report to identify further diverse contact requirements.

6.5 **Health and Safety Implications**

As noted in the previous report, staff in the Contact Management Command are regularly exposed to trauma which can impact on wellbeing and subsequent performance. A trauma tracker is utilised to minimise this risk. The command has a supportive but robust attendance management process. Numerous staff within the command have support needs and reasonable adjustments are implemented to accommodate these as far as is reasonably possible. The Force has comprehensive wellbeing resources available.

A deep clean of the FCR took place in December as planned, along with other essential maintenance. There are some structural concerns relating to the RC that are being addressed through the estates board.

7.0 **Consultation/Engagement**

- Chief Superintendent Stuart Hooper- Head of Contact Management
- Superintendent Bonnie Moore- Deputy Head of Contact Management
- Alice Lockwood- Performance Analysis Unit

8.0 **Actions for Improvement**

Reference is made throughout the report to four areas for improvement (AFIs) that were identified during the last HMICFRS inspection. Of note, one of these AFIs has been formally discharged in the reporting period, with pleasing progress noted in respect of the remaining through both HMICFRS and the Deputy Chief Constable's checkpoint meetings.

The TOM that has been designed takes account of the AFIs, but also NPCC guidance, best practice and academia, findings of a peer review and staff feedback.

In respect of the remaining AFIs, significant improvements in performance metrics are observed; processes and policies have been established and robust governance processes are in place. This includes a continuing Public Contact Gold Group, chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable, and a Call Handling Gold Group, chaired by ACC Nolan. This is in addition to performance meetings held within the Command. Driving further improvement and sustaining delivery will be dependent on achieving consistent tactical delivery.

There has been significant investment of staff in the last 12 months. As noted in the previous report, this presents a challenge in terms of experience and retention; however efficiency and effectiveness are improving with time, supported by more effective performance reporting and the recent addition of a command analyst.

In the reporting period, recruitment of two new members of the Senior Leadership Team has concluded, who will be in post prior to the launch of the TOM. This will provide far greater resilience within the Command team, affording greater opportunity to influence and develop culture and drive performance and accountability.

Considering the specific AFIs and related activity:

Non- emergency call handling wait times and abandonment rates

There are notable improvements in wait times and abandonment rates. The most significant contributor to this has been the triage process. The addition of new staff and further investment in effective resource planning has contributed, and the introduction of the new telephony system (ICCS) in January will further drive this. There has been investment in understanding the detail of abandoned calls which has been positively received and is being shared as good practice with other forces. When the TOM goes live, all staff are required to have an omniscient skill set which will provide greater resilience to manage demand across all channels.

Providing the public with crime prevention advice

This AFI is formally discharged, but the Command continues to monitor and ensure consistent delivery. This was achieved through enabling a system where bulk uploads of SMS messages could be sent in relevant cases, in addition to any verbal advice that may be given. Data products are available that enable managers to review whether the messages have been sent as required.

Our response to repeat callers and victims

There are designated staff that manage the most prolific repeat callers. These staff work closely with Local Policing and Community Policing Teams to ensure a holistic approach and engage with mental health professionals and other statutory bodies to ensure a supportive and effective approach is taken. All staff are trained in the risk assessment model 'THRIVE' (detailed in the previous report) where a renewed emphasis has been placed on repeat victimisation and how this may increase vulnerability. Call scripting allows managers to ensure that staff are asking relevant questions to identify repeat victims and callers.

Our handling and response to non-emergency incidents

There have been significant improvements in this area since the point of inspection. This has been achieved through working closely with Local Policing Commands to ensure a joint responsibility and ownership of the issue and is governed through the Public Contact Gold Group.

The Command has embraced the 'Right Care, Right Person' concept, which has led to a sizeable reduction in the number of incidents recorded and subsequently deployed to, where they are better suited to another agency. An all-command training programme is being progressed to ensure consistent and robust delivery of this concept.

There is daily scrutiny of this metric, with older incidents being scrutinised. There are clear processes defined in policy to ensure timely and effective progression.

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

Multiple workstreams are in train which are anticipated to support further improvements in performance. The priority is to deliver the best possible service to the public and to ensure they are at the heart of all decisions made.

- The new telephony system (ICCS) was installed in January, so the full benefits are yet to be realised or tested. It is anticipated this will provide a more efficient service for the public and will provide greater resilience within the command. The new system also affords improved performance management opportunities.
- The TOM is scheduled to go live in April 2024. This amounts to a full command restructure that will provide greater resilience through omnicompetent staff and a more efficient service for the public as a result.
- Triad is a commercial company currently completing a technology review for the command (this includes the Contact Management Command in Kent, due to the collaborated IT resource). This will consider how we can maximise opportunities and efficiencies, including innovative options that may assist with automating more functions to provide consistency and efficiency.
- A post-implementation review of the RVR team is due to commence in February with a defined term of reference, to ensure opportunities are exploited and to consider the benefits realisation.
- Procurement is now complete for the Workforce Management Solution with installation anticipated in the early part of the summer. This will assist with resource planning, maximising the ability to respond to demand, and creating capacity within the workforce who currently manually manage this process.
- The 'Right Care, Right Person' work comprises of four strands. Significant improvements have been observed in relation to our handling of 'Concern for Welfare' incidents which has seen a reduction in recorded incidents and a reduction in officer deployments. The next of the strands of work is due to commence within the forthcoming reporting period.