

## Performance and Resources Scrutiny Programme 2024

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

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Public Contact Performance and Response to High Harm Crime</b>
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<b>Chief Officer:</b>	<b>ACC Rachel Nolan</b>
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<b>Report from:</b>	<b>Essex Police</b>
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<b>Date of Approval by Chief Officer</b>	<b>ACC Nolan – 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2024</b>
<b>COG meeting date / date of approval (Please indicate whether paper presented to COG or not)</b>	<b>COG - 1<sup>st</sup> May 2024</b>

### 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**

The report focuses on the performance and work in the period from January to March 2024. 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 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 of 5 minutes or less. 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 we have continued to see improvements in 101 call handling and abandonment rates. In addition, there is an increase in positive channel shift to online services. It is anticipated the installation of the new telephony system that occurred in January will drive further improvements in the forthcoming period, despite some early implementation issues which are being worked through.

The report details the formal areas for improvement as outlined by the 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**

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

In January 2024, a new telephony system was installed (ICCS); despite some implementation issues the system will provide more opportunities for performance management.

The Target Operating Model (TOM) launched on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2024. All primary contact is now received in the Contact Centre which will provide a more efficient service for the public and our partners.

The Command was previously the subject of an inspection by HMICFRS and was given four areas for improvement as a result. Two of the areas of improvement have since been discharged. The two remaining areas are as follows:

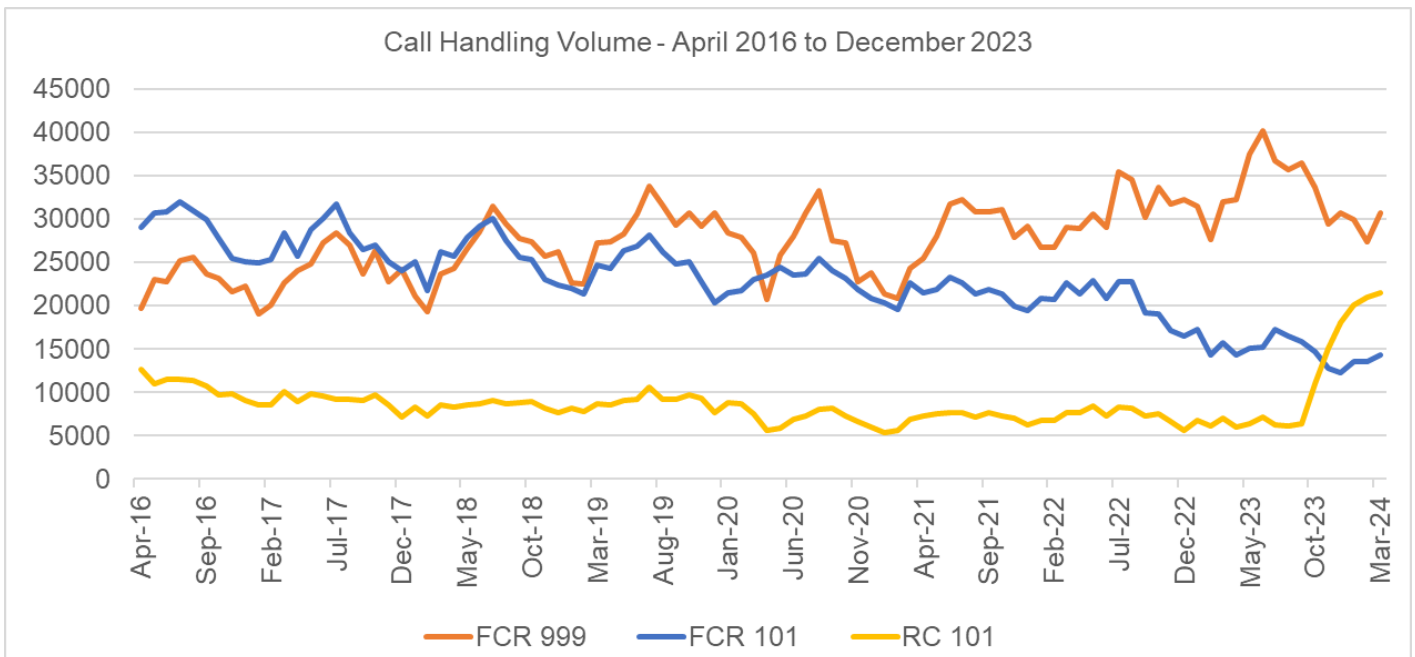
- Non-emergency call handling wait times and abandonment rates
- Our handling and response to emergency incidents

At the point of review through the DCC star chamber both AFIs were given amber status. Whilst performance in these areas has been positive we are keen to see stability whilst the TOM is implemented prior to the AFIs being discharged.

**5.0 Current Work and Performance**

- In January 2024, a new telephony system was installed (ICCS), there has been some early implementation issues identified with the system; however, this is subject to a gold group and working with key stakeholders.
- The two PSE Command Team members were identified, and vetting was completed with both team members taking up their roles on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2024.
- During this reporting period there has been intense preparation for the TOM and following an operational readiness review the model went live as scheduled on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2024.

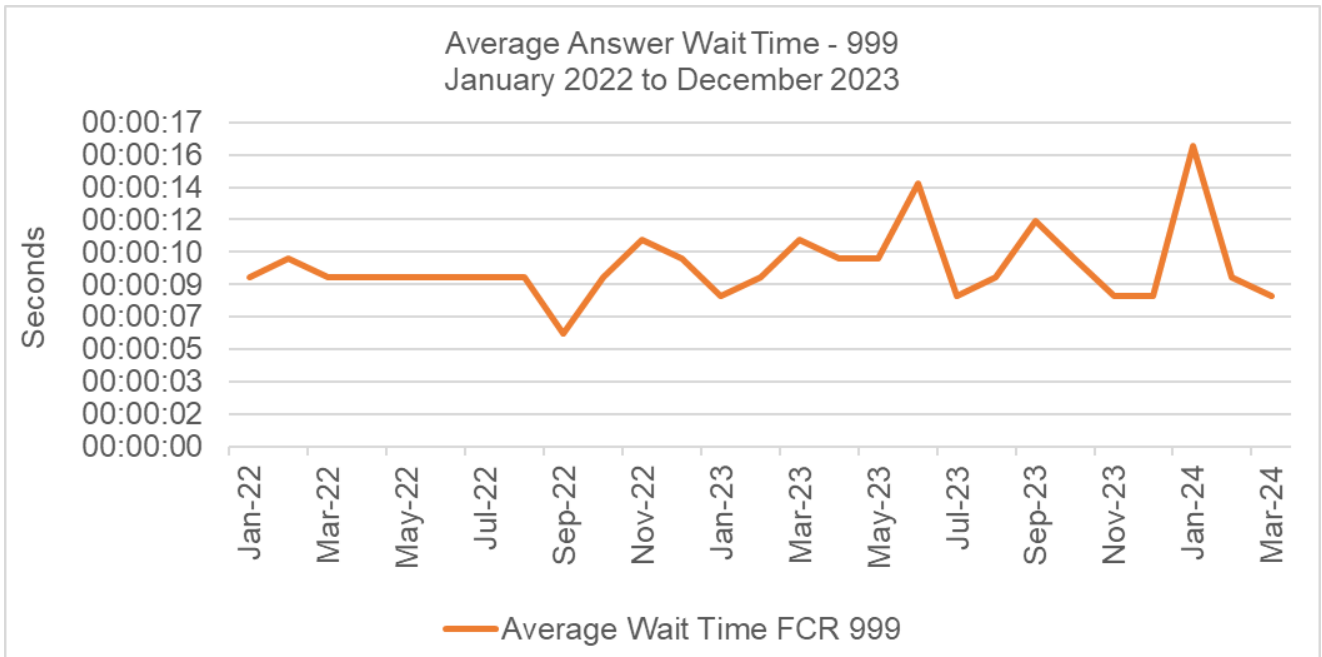
**Call Handling**



**Figure 1 – Call Handling Volume**

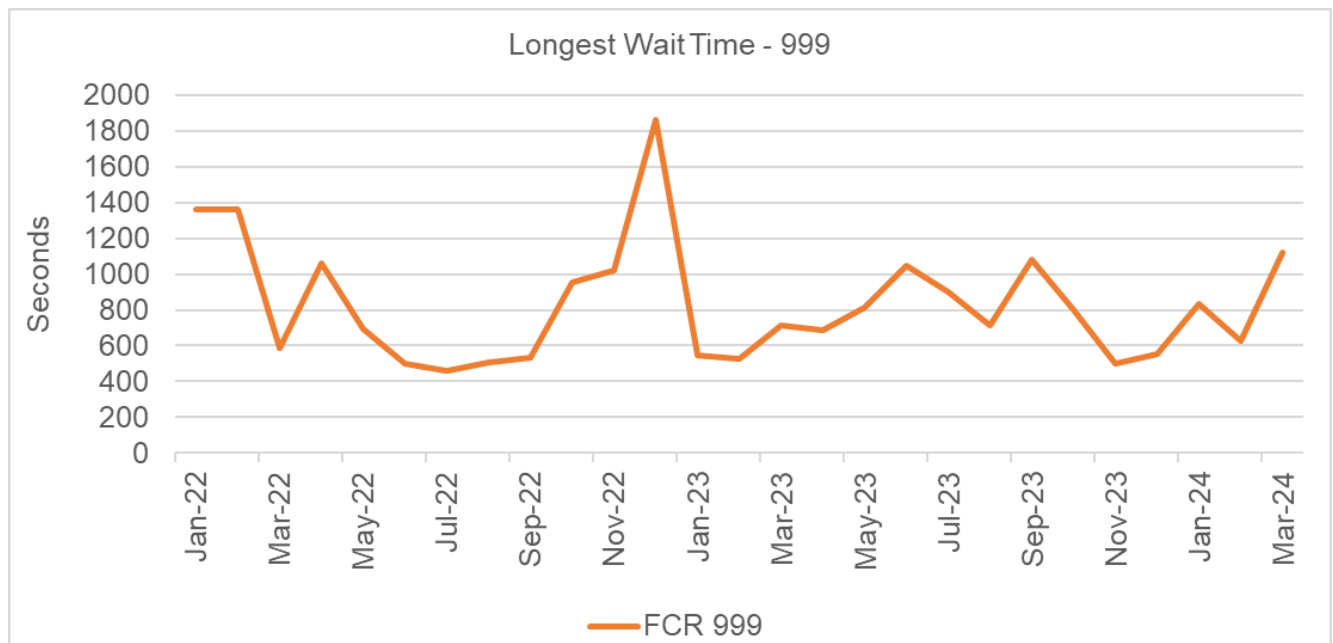
Figure 1 shows the calls taken in the Force Control Room (FCR) and the Resolution Centre (RC) between April 2016 and March 2024. The improvements in 101 call handling are attributable to the call triage process which has shown a drop in FCR 101 calls and increase in RC 101 calls this quarter. March 2024 reached the highest RC 101 calls over this whole period, reaching 21,522. This is reflected in the decrease in FCR 101 calls. The implemented triage process was never intended to be a long term solution due to the additional process required for the victim,

therefore this process was removed as of 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2024 in line with TOM implementation.



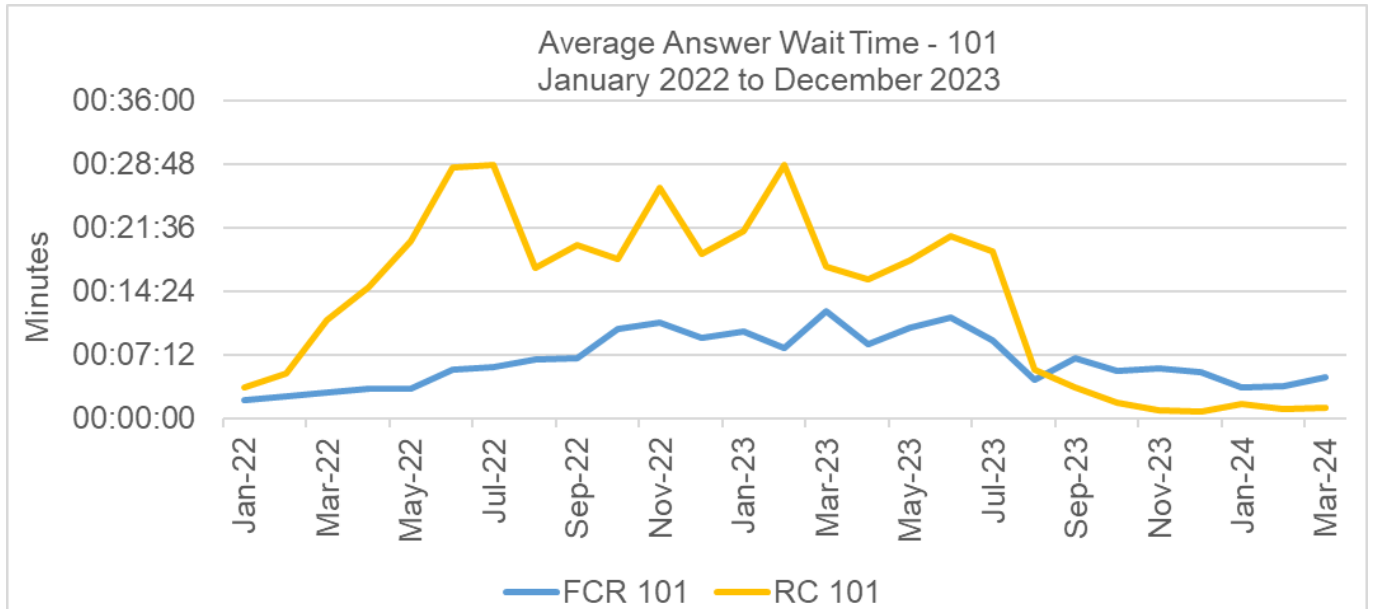
**Figure 2 – Average answer wait time FCR 999**

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 an increase in wait times, the longest average wait being in January 2024 at 16 seconds. The shortest average wait time in this period was in September 2022 at 6 seconds. Whilst a moderate increase has been experienced this remains within tolerance of the national service level agreement.



**Figure 3 – Longest wait time 999**

The longest wait time remains in December 2022, which related to a particular call which was detailed within the previous iteration of the report. In the relevant quarter the moderate increase in wait time may be in relation to the ongoing change programme within the command, including implementing and embedding new ICCS telephony system.

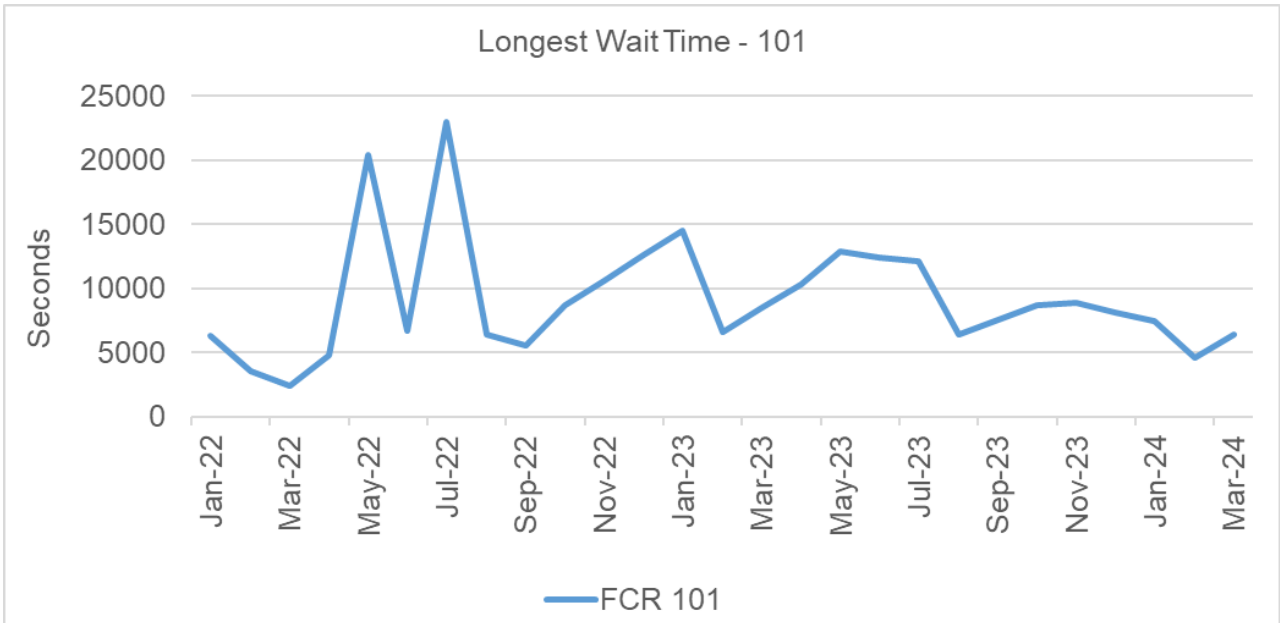


**Figure 4 – Average answer wait time 101**

The longest average wait time for FCR 101 calls between January 2022 and March 2024 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 improved significantly since August 2023.

The longest average wait time for RC 101 calls between January 2022 and March 2024 was 28 minutes 43 seconds in February 2023. The shortest average wait time in this period was 46 seconds in December 2023.

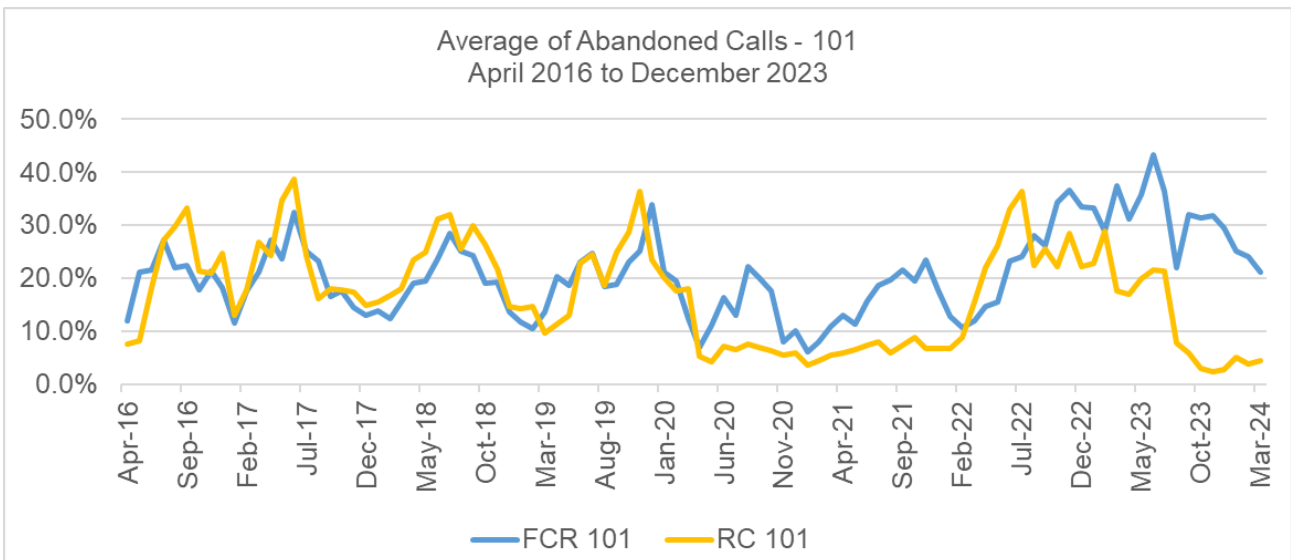
The average time to answer a call has increased in all 3 months since the last quarter, with January 2024 being the highest this quarter at 1 minute 37 seconds. This is likely to be attributed to the issues experienced during the ICCS implementation.



**Figure 5 – Longest wait time 101**

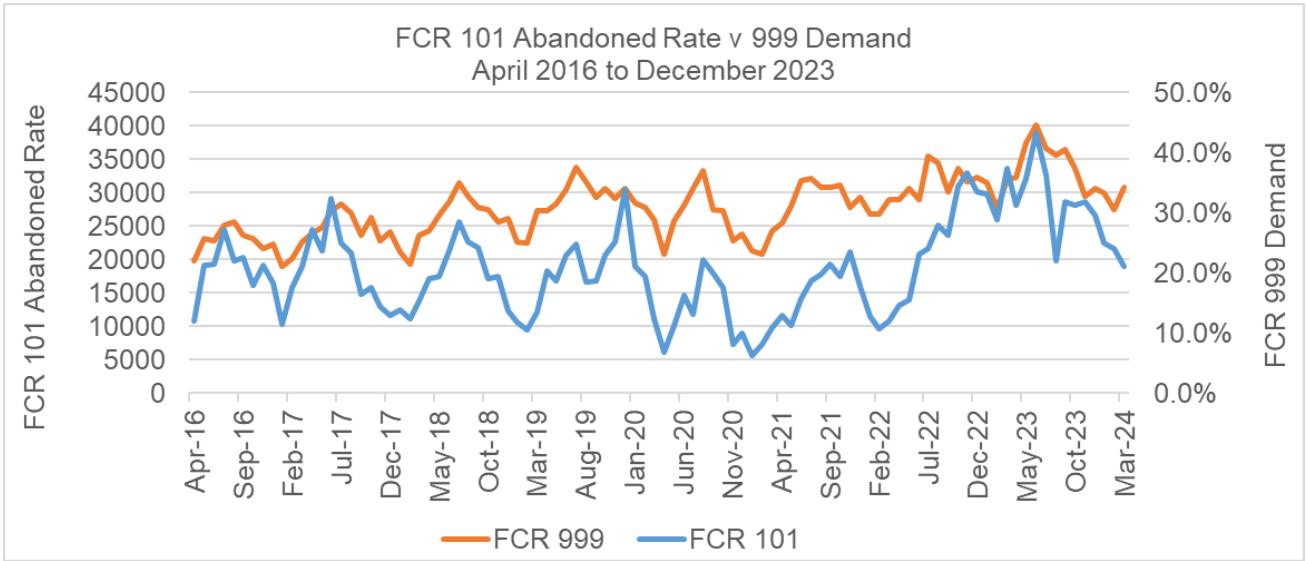
The longest wait time for 101 999 calls between January 2022 and March 2024 was in July 2022 with 22,961 seconds (382 minutes). The lowest month in this period was March 2022 with 2,386 seconds (39 minutes).

101 wait times have seen a decrease each month since the last quarter. February 2024 being the lowest at 4,598 seconds (76 minutes) the lowest since March 2022.



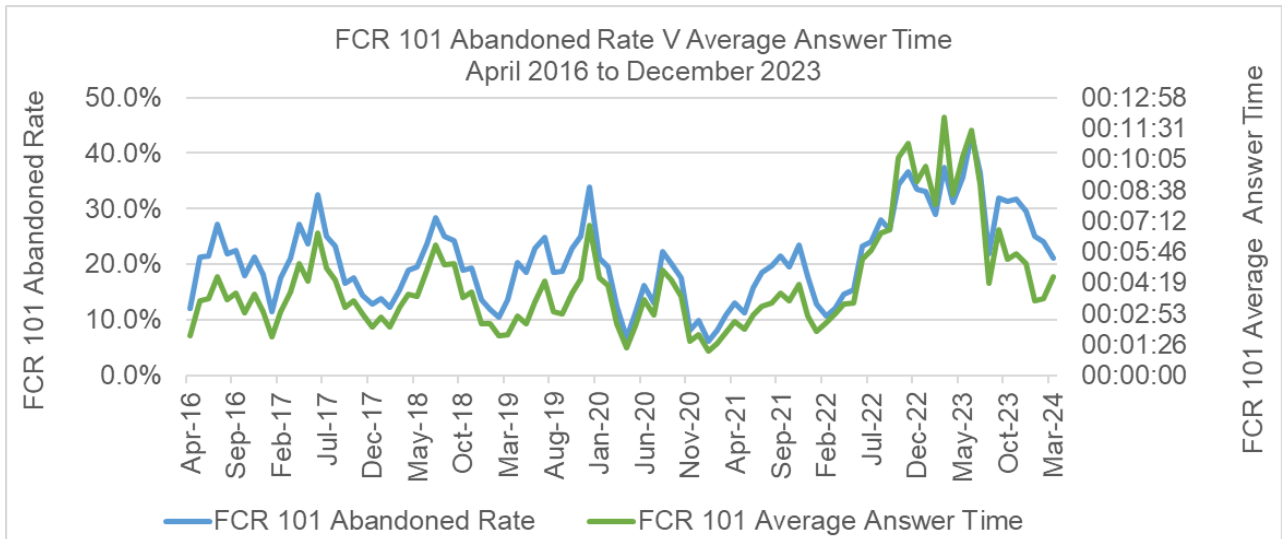
**Figure 6 – Abandoned Calls 101**

The above chart 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. There is a clear correlation shown between the 101 wait time and abandonment rate whilst the triage process was implemented.



**Figure 7 – FCR 101 abandoned rate v 999 demand**

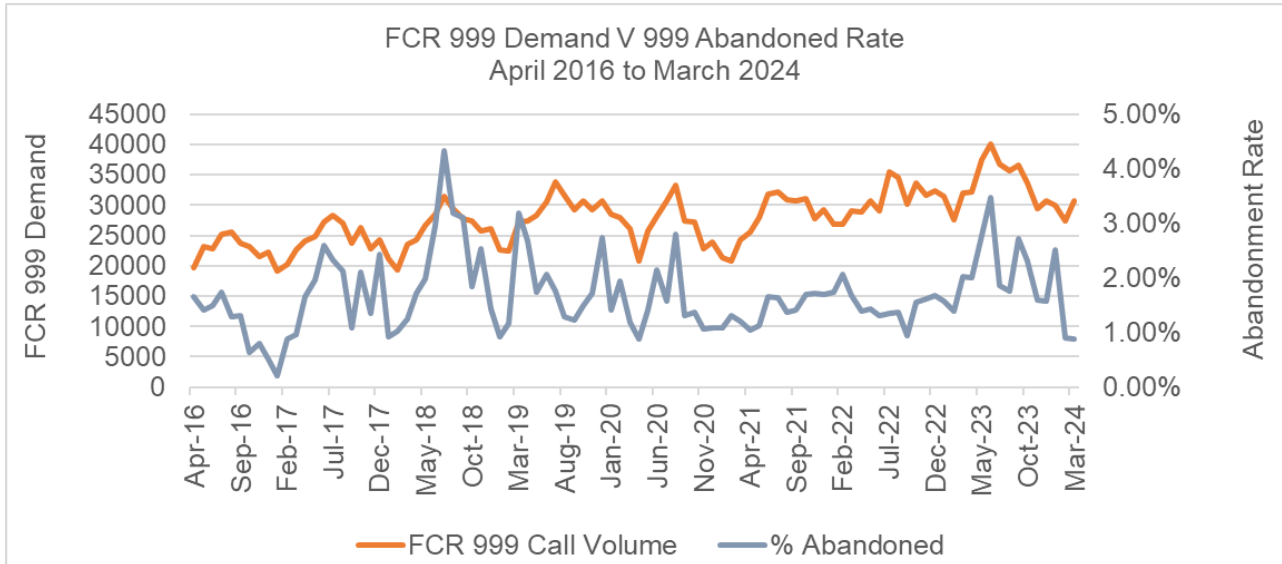
The above chart shows the 101 Abandoned rates when compared with the 999-call demand from April 2016 to March 2024. January 2024 to March 2024 has seen an increase in abandoned rate for FCR 101 and remained steady for both abandoned rate and demand for FCR 999. Within the FCR the same staff base answer both 999 emergency calls and 101 therefore an increase in demand on 999 impacts on 101 performance.



**Figure 8 – 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, continuing to drop through to March 2024. January 2024 being the lowest this quarter at 3 minutes 28 seconds.

101 calls may be abandoned if the wait time is too long or not a suitable time to remain on the line. Some calls may be abandoned following the IVR message which provides information and advice in relation to reporting online which is a positive channel shift.



**Figure 9 – FCR 999 demand v 999 abandoned rate**

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 dialled in error. There is a defined process covered in policy that outlines the expectations of call takers in these circumstances.

Essex Police is currently developing a campaign with our media team to educate the public in relation to abandonment of 999 calls and what the public should do if they have dialled 999 either in error or no longer require an emergency response.



**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	30th/44	6	Dec-23	41st/44	12.85
Jan-24	16th/44	5	Jan-24	42nd/44	14.14
Feb-24	5th/44	4	Feb-24	41st/44	12.85
Mar-24	Not available		Mar-24	Not available	

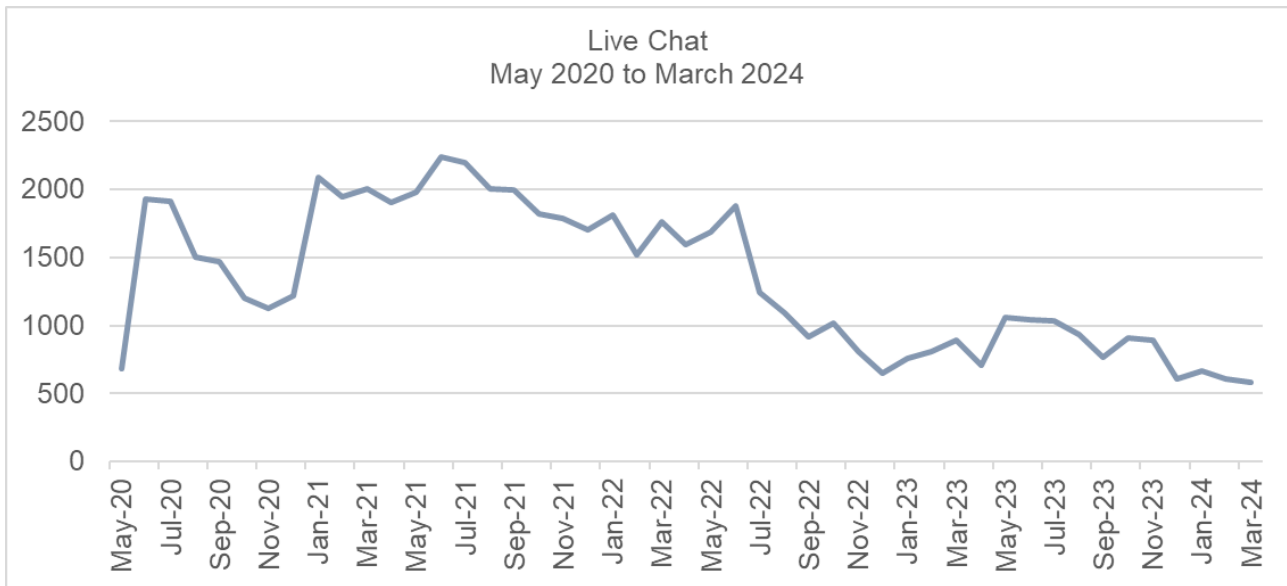
**Figure 10 – 999 performance data, national position**

Essex answering time, based on median, has been 6 seconds in every month until January 2024 where it has decreased to 5 seconds, and February even lower at 4 seconds.

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).

During this period, intense work was being undertaken in the design and preparation for launch of the TOM and the described ICCS implementation issues and outages will have impacted on the mean answer time.

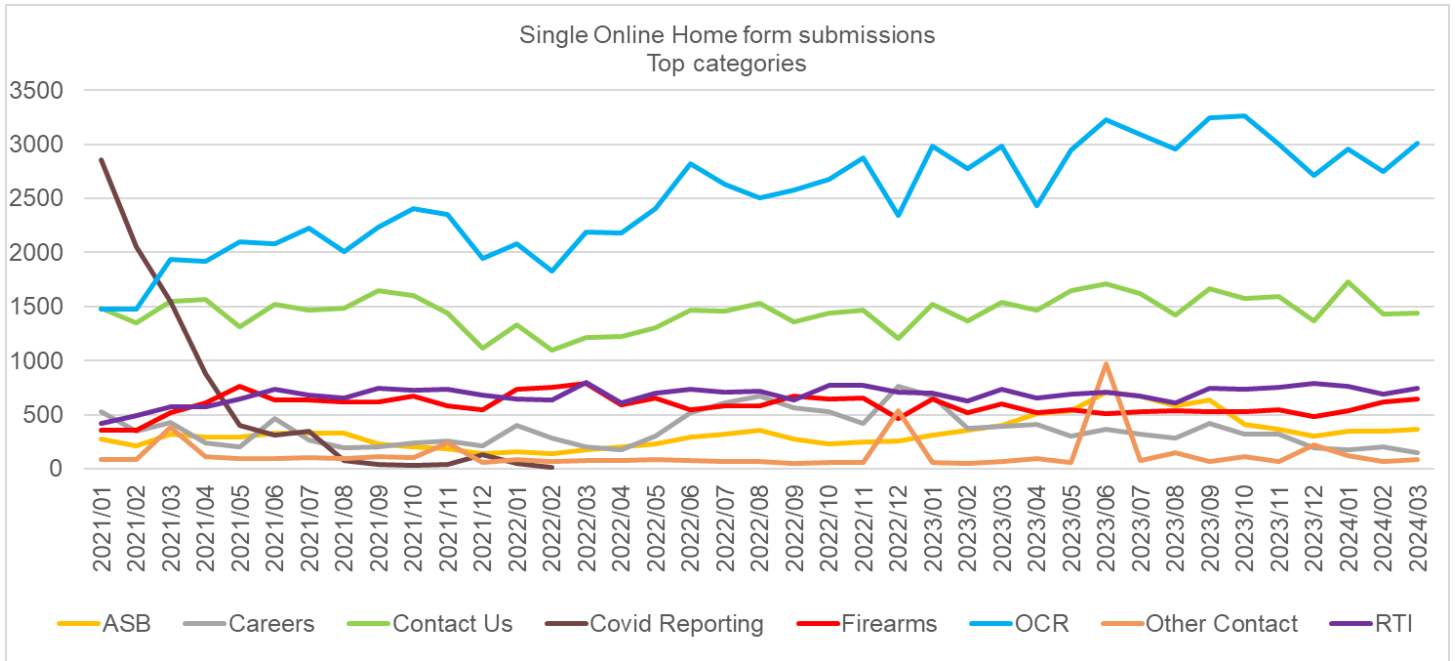
### Live Chat and Single Online Home



**Figure 11 – 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.

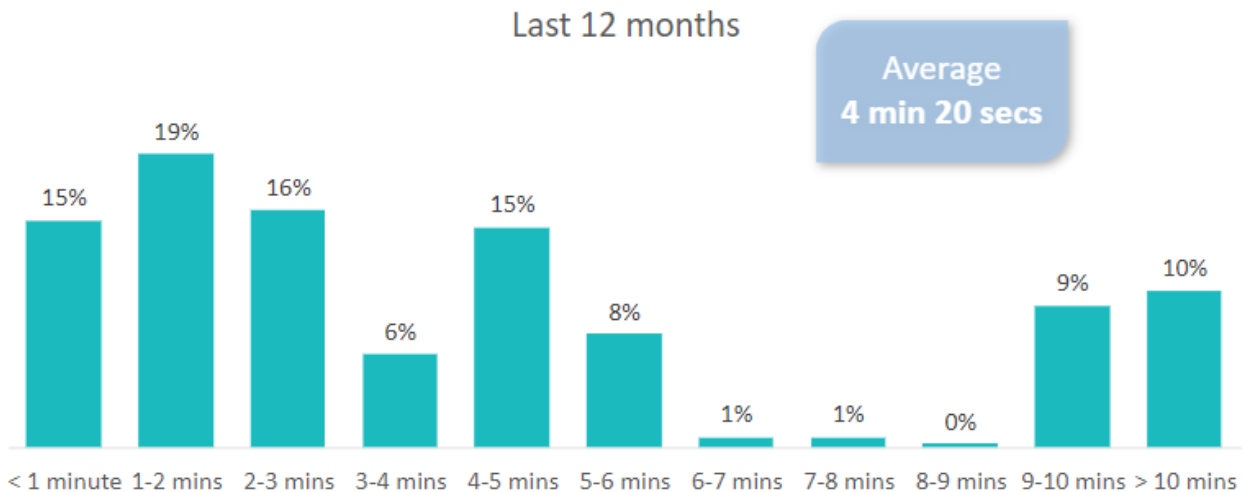
The chat volumes have been declining since June 2022, but have remained steady since. March 2024 saw the lowest chats received reaching only 582. As part of the TOM model the aspiration is for the live chat to be extended to 24/7 provision by July 2024, enabling the public to contact the police via the live chat facility at the time convenient to them, following a review of the provision. Preparation for this is currently underway with licences being reviewed and a new guidance document being produced for a consistent service.



**Figure 12 – Single Online Home form submission**

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. We encourage the use of online contact channel, and the number of SOH submissions is increasing which is positive.

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

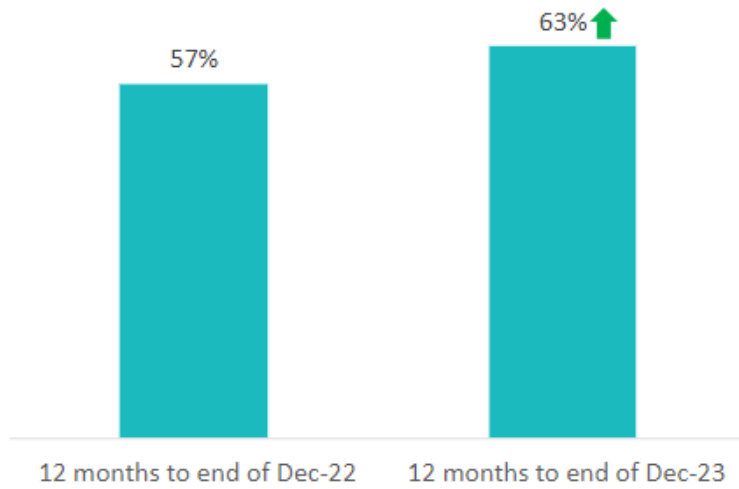


**Figure 13 – Public survey on time to take to get through to call handler**

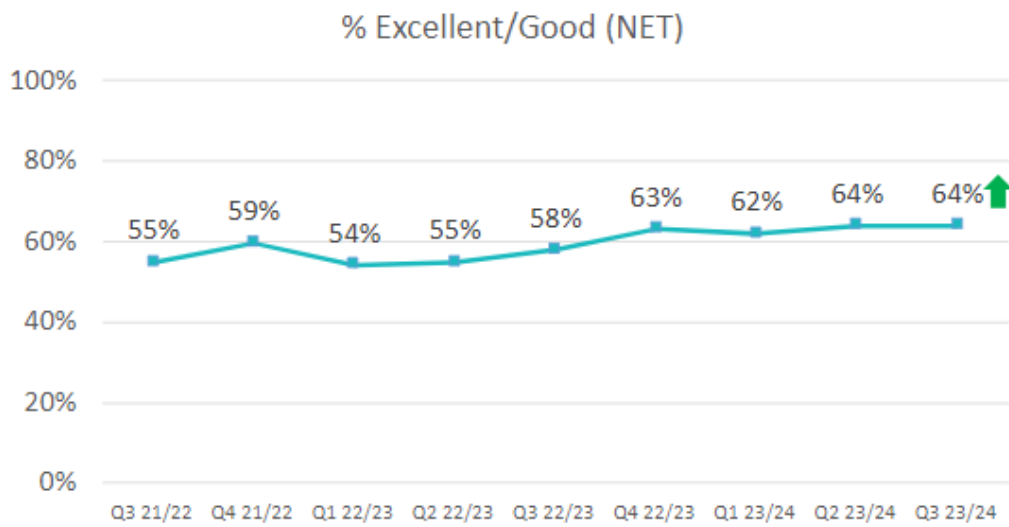
There is a wide dispersion in what Essex residents think is an acceptable number of minutes to get through to a call handler when using the 101 non-emergency number.

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.

### Annual Trend



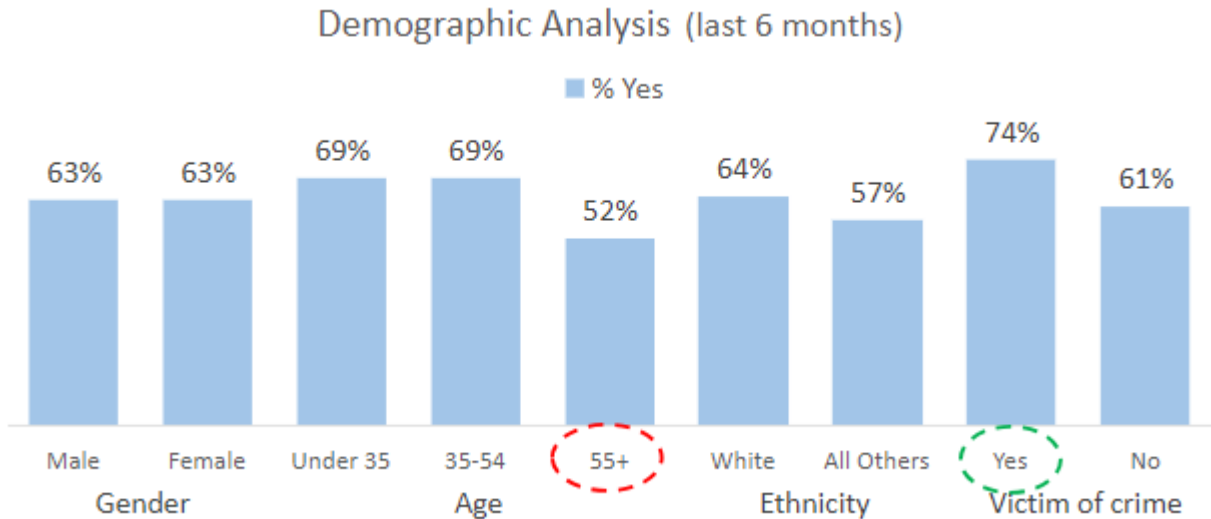
### Quarterly Trend



↑ significantly higher than same period last year

**Figure 14 – Public survey on Essex Police’s online services**

Those aware they can access some of our services online increased significantly in the last year.

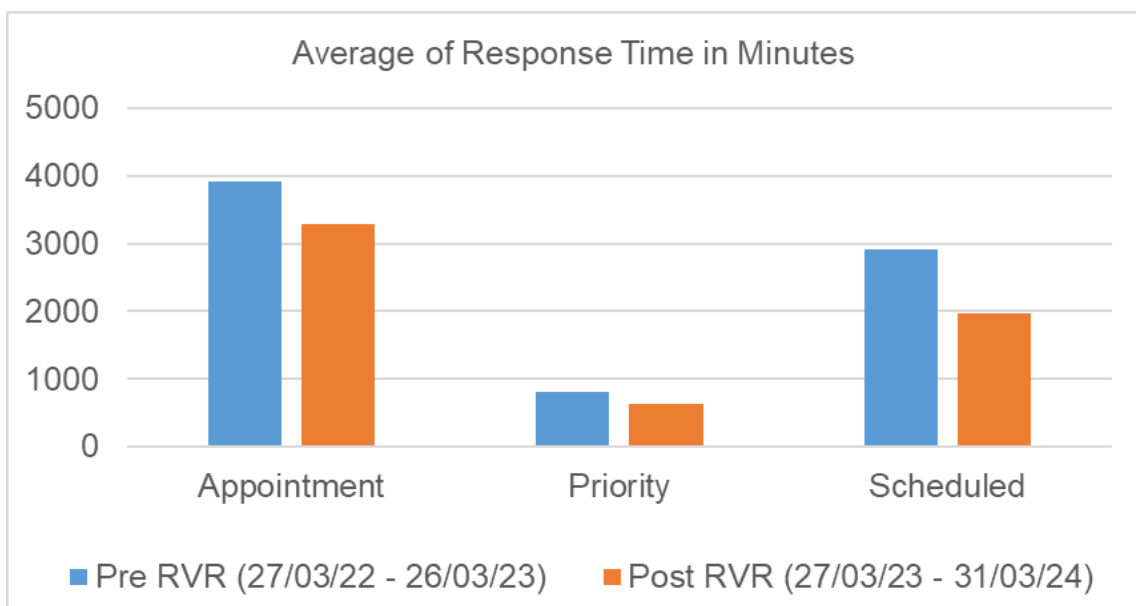


**Figure 15 – Public Survey on Essex Police’s Online Services**

Over 55s are the least likely to be aware they can access some of Essex Police services online. Victims of crime are the most likely to be aware they can access some of Essex Police’s services online (74%). Essex Police continues to raise awareness through media campaigns of online services which are provided to the public which is essential to assist in demand reduction in the contact centre. As previously mentioned, the command is working with media on a campaign in relation to call abandonment.

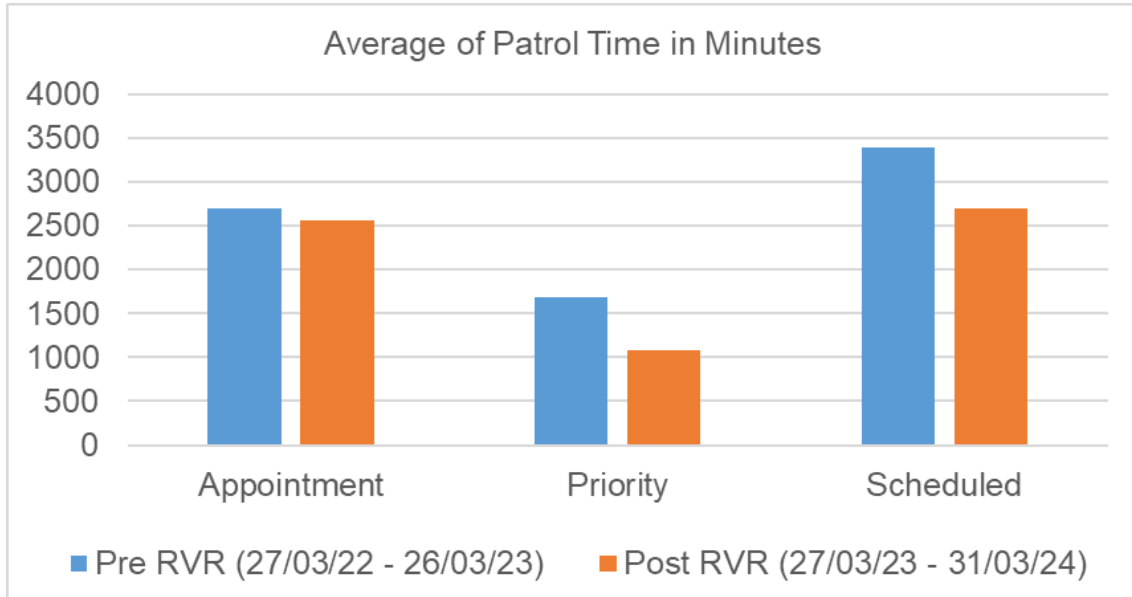
**Rapid Video Response (RVR) Performance**

Essex Police introduced Rapid Video Response in March 2023 as an alternative method for responding to domestic abuse incidents of a lower response priority.



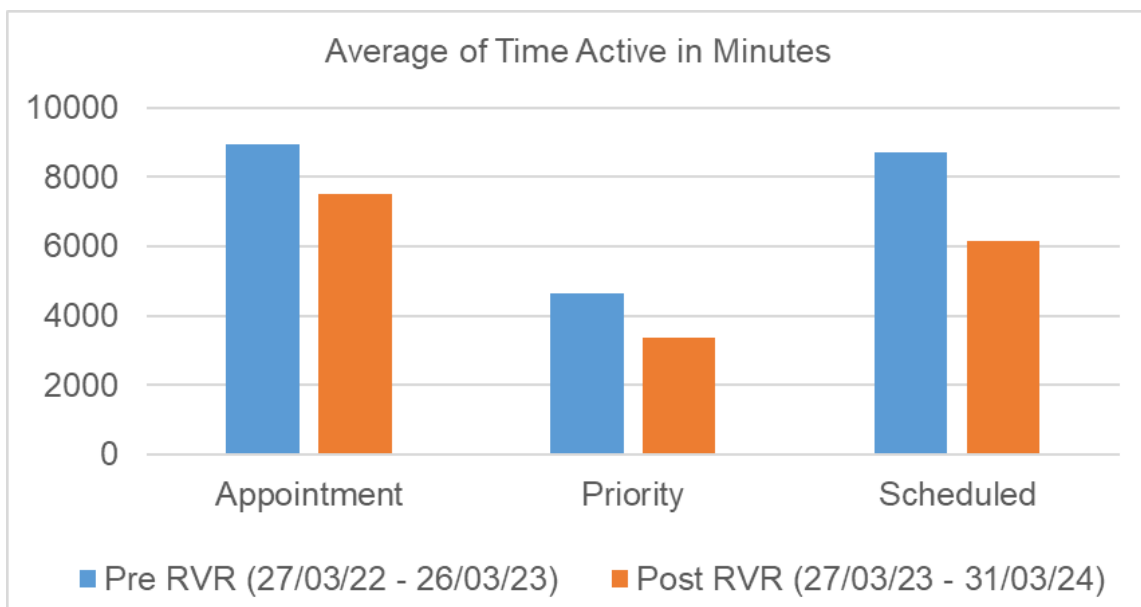
**Figure 16 – Average of Response Times in Minutes**

The 12 months prior to the introduction of RVR were compared to the 12 months post implementation. The data showed a reduction in average time to attend Appointment, Priority and Scheduled Domestic Abuse incidents. A post implementation review of the RVR team is due to commence in the forthcoming quarter.



**Figure 17 – Average patrol 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 18 – Average of time active 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

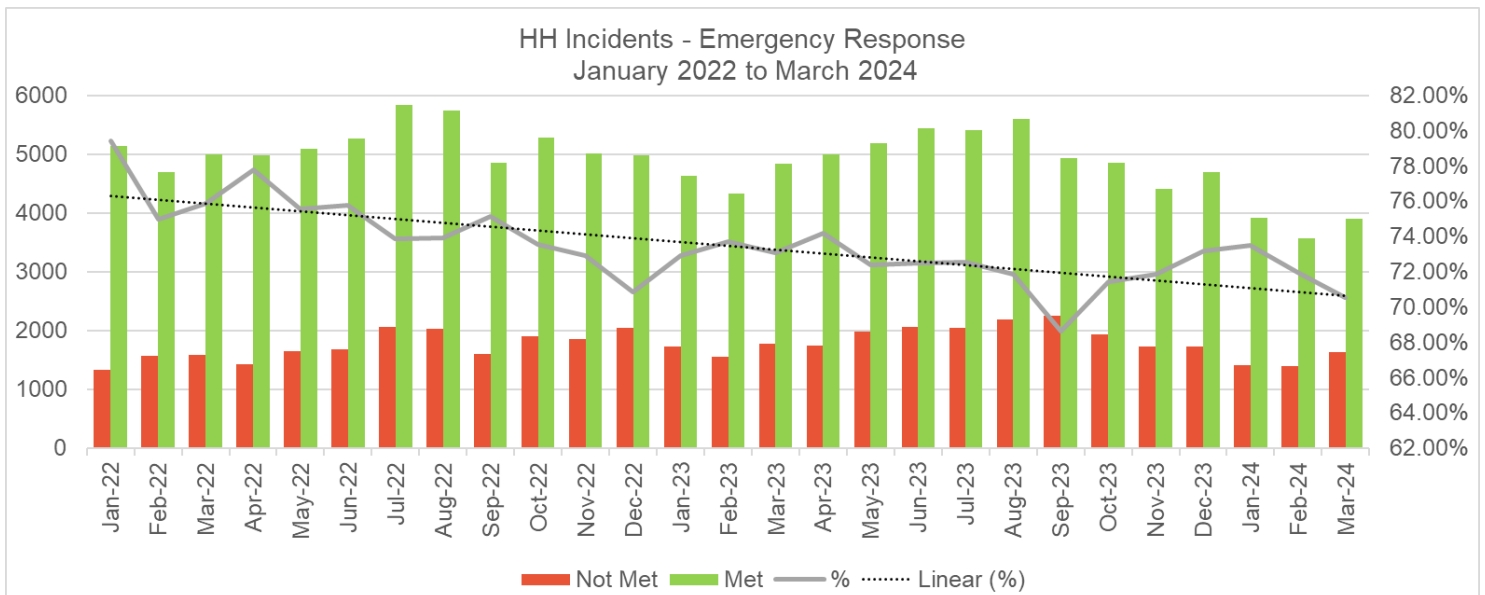
improved since the last quarter where the average of time at incidents for Appointments post RVR was higher than pre RVR. This has shown a positive change and impact.

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.

**Policy on High Harm Attendance**

The high harm policy was referenced in the previous iteration of this report. All policies and procedures are currently being reviewed to reflect the changes under TOM. There are no changes in terms of attendance times or SLA in relation to high harm incidents.

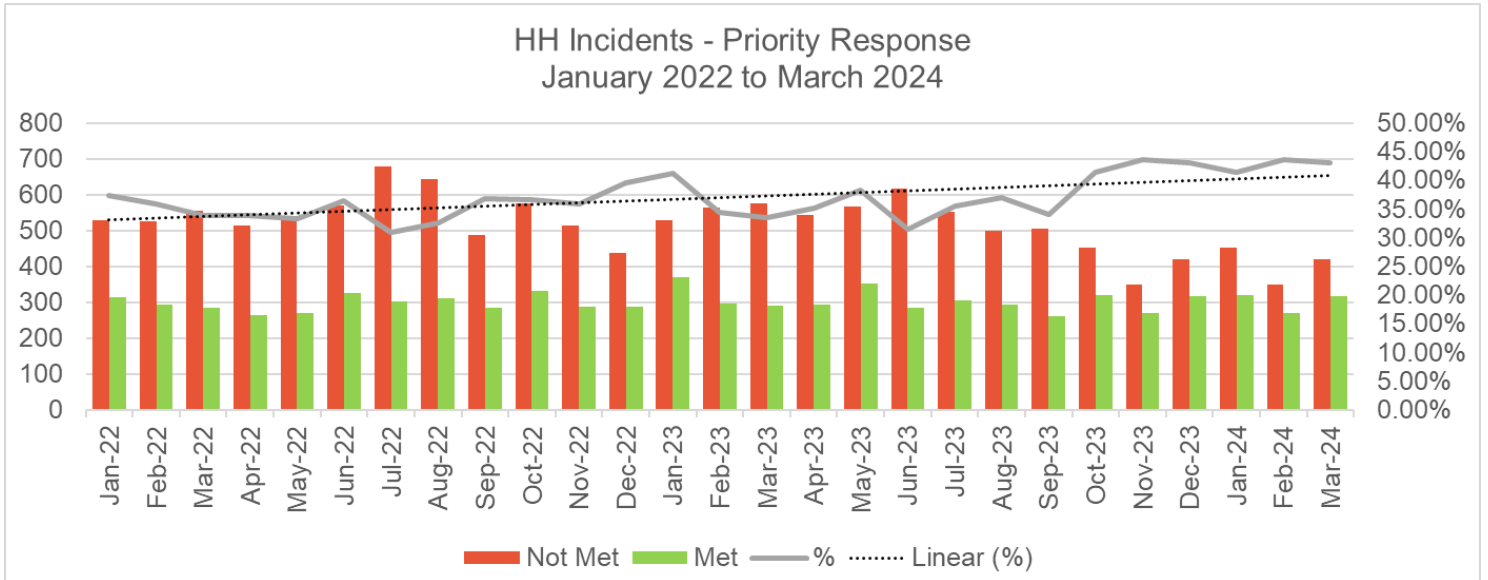
**Response to High Harm Incidents**



**Figure 19 – HH incidents – Emergency Response**

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 March 2024, 70.52% were met. This is a decrease of 2.66%pts compared to December 2023 when 73.18% were

responded to within the target 15 or 20 minutes. Comparing March 2024 (70.52%) with March 2023 (75.89%), there has seen a decrease of 5.37%pts



**Figure 20 – HH incident – Priority response**

January 2024 to March 2024 has seen a decrease in priority incidents. The overall percentage met has increased this quarter from 41.32% in October 2023 to 43.03% in March 2023, amounting to a 1.98%pts increase.

A significant amount of work has gone into high harm response times which is governed through the DCC’s public contact gold group to ensure a collaborative problem solving response between Contact Management, Local Policing Areas and others. This includes robust monitoring daily of available resources and ongoing work through Learning and Development to ensure the right distribution of trained response drivers.

‘Right Care, Right Person’ (RCRP) continues to be adopted nationally ensuring people in need receive the right response from the right agency with the aim to create capacity in policing whilst ensuring the individual receives the appropriate support.

**6.0 Implications (Issues)**

The ratification of the TOM was on a basis of the model being cost neutral within 12 months. A number of options have been reviewed by the project team, but the early assessment is that this is likely to be sourced from a reduction in staff headcount.



## 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** - 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 our staff to provide a better service to victims. Officers within the Rapid Video Response (RVR) are completing a Domestic Abuse Specialist Investigators (DASI) course. The command has reviewed the training course material ahead of the launch of the TOM.
- **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 our response times to emergency and non-emergency incidents. The improvement in response times is anticipated to lead to enhanced victim satisfaction and increase 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 we provide 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 which is attributable to the current operating hours of this service. As detailed, the provision of this service is being extended to 24/7 in July 2024.
- 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.

These risks are monitored through the contact management programme board and the performance star chamber and positive progress is being experienced against these risks.

### **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 999 and the upcoming increase in the accessibility of live chat by moving to a 24/7 provision. There is an ongoing technology review for the command which will scope onward opportunities, including an equivalent service for 101.

### **6.5 Health and Safety Implications**

As detailed in previous iterations of the report, staff in the Contact Management Command are regularly exposed to trauma which can impact on wellbeing and subsequent performance and the command continues to utilise a trauma tracker to minimise this risk. The command has a supportive but robust attendance management process and staff within the command with support needs are supported through the reasonable adjustments process. The Force has comprehensive wellbeing support and resources available to all staff.

Overflow estate plans have been developed as part of the TOM and all business continuity plans are being reviewed and updated in line with the TOM model.

### **7.0 Consultation/Engagement**

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

## **8.0 Actions for Improvement**

Reference is made throughout the report to the commands areas for improvement (AFIs) that were identified. Two of the identified AFIs have been discharged following positive progress.

The remaining two (detailed below) are progressing positively in the reporting period, however, due to changes under the TOM these are currently being monitored to ensure the progress is maintained.

- Non- emergency call handling wait times and abandonment rates
- Our handling and response to non-emergency incidents

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

At the time of writing the command are three week post go live for the TOM . During the early stages there is an intensive upskilling programme to work through with the staff in the command and therefore interim processes have been adopted while the model stabilises.

The shift pattern review is the next phase of the TOM and is to follow with recent agreement from Chief Officer Group in terms of the agreed principles and the project team are now developing this workstream.

There is ongoing work continuing with our partners as part of our technology review with the potential to automate a number of processes. This may offer the potential to release officer headcount with the command and provide a more effective service to victims.

Installation of the Workforce Management Solution is anticipated in the summer period assisting in the command's ability to plan resources to meet demand and create capacity by removing the manual process currently managed within the Force.