

Meeting	Policing Performance Committee
Date	17 March 2022
Location	Video Conference
Title of Paper	101 Call Handling and Incident Response
Presented By	John Hawkins, ACC Local Policing North and C3
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached	No

PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to provide the SPA Policing Performance Committee with an update in relation to Call Handling.

Members are invited to discuss the contents of this paper.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Police Scotland have experienced challenges in respect of call handling during the unprecedented coronavirus public health emergency, which has been in line with other emergency and public services.
- 1.2 Causation factors included an extension of the THRIVE (Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability and Engagement) assessment to include COVID-19 specific questions; physical distancing requirements reducing capacity within Contact, Command and Control (C3) Division; increased absence due to COVID-19 coupled with self-isolation requirements; an increase in public contact with members of the public seeking additional information or reporting concerns about COVID-19 restrictions; and the impact from displaced demand from other public and emergency services.
- 1.3 Throughout these challenges, Police Scotland prioritised emergency responses and maintained responses to emergency (999) demand with no discernible drop in service. Police Scotland did not discontinue response to non-emergency demand during the coronavirus pandemic, however, the challenges outlined above impacted on 101 answer times and there was an increase in discontinued calls to 101. Mitigation measures were introduced, including the equipping of alternative sites to operate as service centres, and the development of alternative means of contact.

2. FURTHER DETAIL ON THE REPORT TOPIC

- 2.1 As a result of the challenges faced by Police Scotland a number of work streams were progressed, in the short to medium term, to mitigate risks, under the strategic oversight of Assistant Chief Constable John Hawkins via a Short Life Working Group (SLWG).
- 2.2 Police Scotland implemented all possible ICT improvements in C3 based on the current ICT infrastructure, undertook a 101 public awareness campaign and introduced a temporary short term workforce agreement in C3 to increase staff uptake on overtime and further support ability to manage peaks in demand thus ensuring additional flexibility and resilience.
- 2.3 The improvements implemented as a result of the SLWG remain in place and are continually reviewed. However, there are no other measures the SLWG can implement without an increase in C3 resources.

2.4 Therefore, an independent review is being conducted by the Head of People Engagement Partnering to ensure all available measures have been implemented and C3 are making best use of resources already in place.

Call Handling Performance

2.5 This following table (Table 1) presents call statistic and performance comparative data from quarter 3 (October – December) in 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22.

Table 1

Call Handling		2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
		Q3	Q3	Q3
Number of 999 / 101 calls	999 Calls	164,086	146,487	167,478
	101 Calls	467,640	463,717	373,558
Average Call Answer Time	999 Calls	13 sec	07 sec	07 sec
	101 Calls	00:01:21	00:02:21	00:02:01
Discontinued calls	999 Calls	1%	0%	1%
	101 Calls	18%	26%	18%
Max Delay in answering	999 Calls	00:03:00	00:05:06	00:05:36
	101 Calls	00:23:40	00:40:46	01:35:14
Number of 999/101 calls that do not result in an incident/crime		262,908	243,728	172,218
Percentage of 999/101 calls that do not result in an incident/crime		41.6%	39.9%	31.8%

2.6 The quarter 1 and quarter 2 figures presented in the papers to the SPA Policing Performance Committee on 1 September 2021 and 9 December 2021 showed the 101 call answering times had increased year on year. As shown within the data above, 101 call answering times have increased in quarter 3 of 2020/21 compared to 2019/20 however have shown a decrease in quarter 3 of 2021/22.

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- 2.7 Although there has been no change to the in-depth initial THRIVE information gathering exercise or requirements to gain additional information in relation to COVID-19 risks, the ICT improvements in C3 based on the current ICT infrastructure and the 101 public awareness campaign had been implemented.
- 2.8 Generally there is a 15% reduction in staffing levels in the Police Scotland Service Centre as a result of staff utilising annual leave. However, as previously reported, from 21 October to 14 November 2021 there was an embargo on annual leave due to COP26. As a result there was only a 1-2% reduction in staffing levels due to annual leave, which is measured. Quarter 3 data includes this period.
- 2.9 This following table (Table 2) presents call statistic and performance comparative data for the month of January in 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22.

Table 2

Call Handling		2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
		January	January	January
Number of 999 / 101 calls	999 Calls	49,091	40,763	52,036
	101 Calls	151,392	139,491	119,995
Average Call Answer Time	999 Calls	12 sec	05 sec	06 sec
	101 Calls	00:01:40	00:01:14	00:02:01
Discontinued calls	999 Calls	1%	0%	1%
	101 Calls	18%	15%	16%
Max Delay in answering	999 Calls	00:09:50	00:05:01	00:05:12
	101 Calls	01:27:31	00:17:47	00:35:37
Number of 999/101 calls that do not result in an incident/crime		75,852	62,119	55,056
Percentage of 999/101 calls that do not result in an incident/crime		37.8%	34.5%	32.0%

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- 2.10 As anticipated, the challenges associated with COVID-19 increased over the festive period and absence in C3 was extremely challenging, which peaked during the first week of 2022. Absences affected both the Police Scotland Service Centre and the Area Control Rooms across Scotland.
- 2.11 The handling of 999 calls remains Police Scotland's priority. Comparison data shows there has been an increase in demand for 999 calls in 2021/22 compared to 2020/21 and 2019/20, however Police Scotland's performance for 999 calls remains positive despite the absence challenges.
- 2.12 The overall performance for 101 calls, discontinued calls and maximum delays, although increased in comparison to last year, still remains positive despite the absence challenges. In comparison to 2019/20, Police Scotland have improved performance in all areas apart from the maximum delay of 101 calls, which has marginally increased.
- 2.13 The temporary short term workforce agreement implemented in C3 to increase staff uptake on overtime was invaluable. Due to the high levels of absence, overtime was required to ensure service delivery and an uptake of 90 to 100% of overtime was utilised each week over the festive period.
- 2.14 When the use of overtime became ineffective in C3, the C3 Area Control Room Scalability Model provided the ability to reduce the talk group numbers and staffing levels in each talk group in a phased approach, ensuring no detriment to the service provided to the public or the safety of officers on the front line. The phased approach has three levels, of which level 1 is business as usual (BAU).
- 2.15 Due to the level of absences during the festive period, C3 utilised this approach on a few occasions, moving to level 2 for specific areas for short periods of time, returning to level 1 (BAU) as quickly as feasible. There was no detriment to service delivery or officer safety during these periods.
- 2.16 C3 relied upon the good will of staff and their commitment to public service across the festive period to work extended hours, rest days and changes to their start and finishing times at extremely short notice to ensure service delivery. However, the use of overtime is not sustainable in the long term.

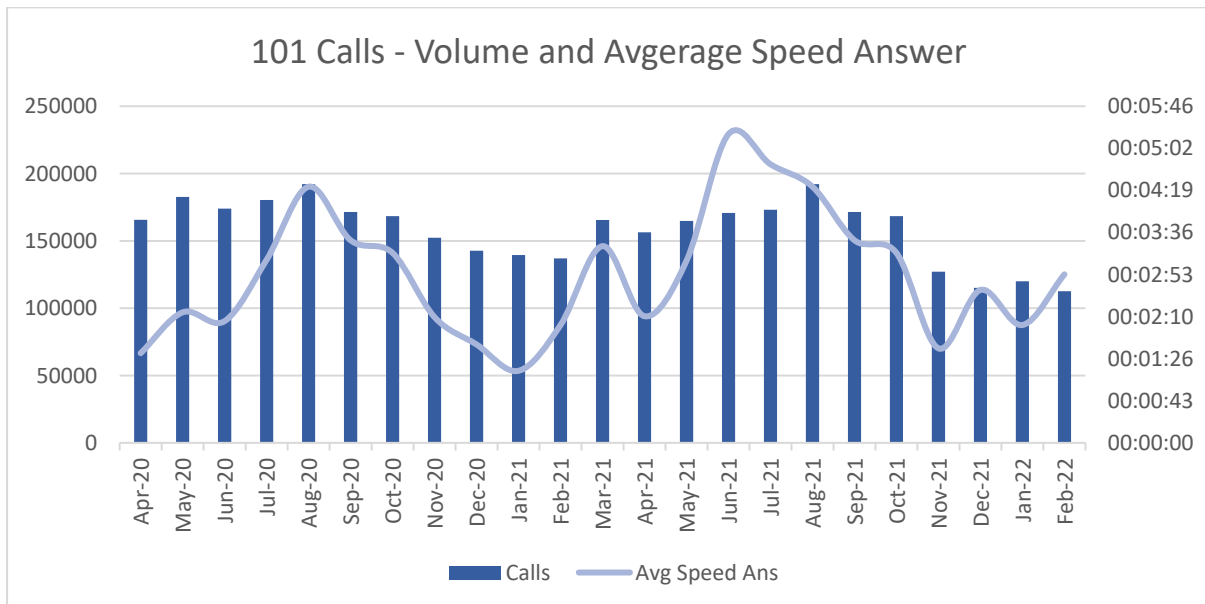
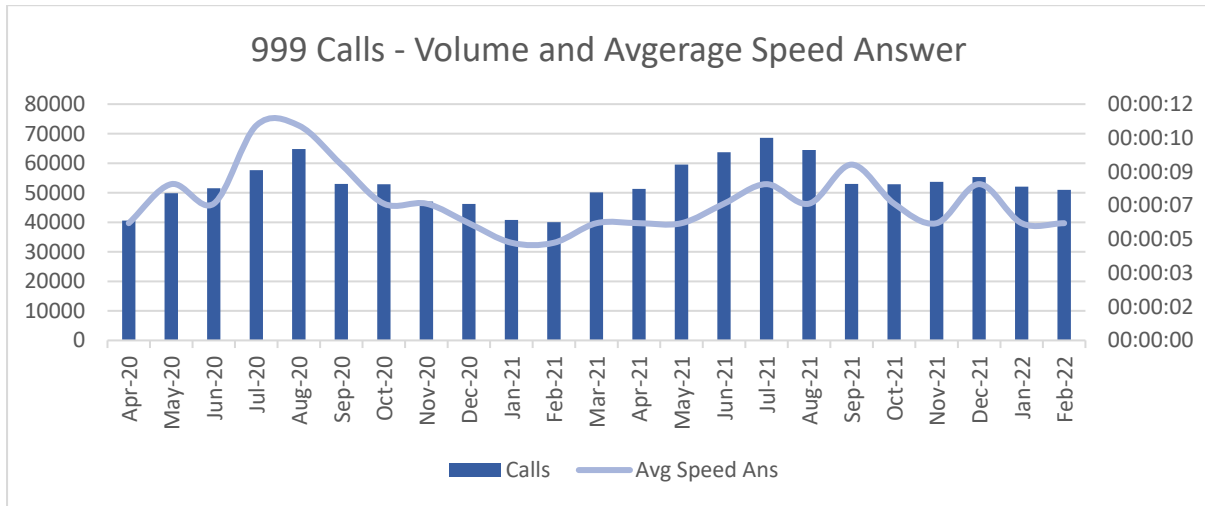
2.17 This following table (Table 3) presents call statistic and performance comparative data for February in 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22.

Table 3

Call Handling		2019/20 February	2020/21 February	2021/22 February
Number of 999 / 101 calls	999 Calls	51,136	40,051	50,974
	101 Calls	152,435	137,020	112,602
Average Call Answer Time	999 Calls	09 sec	05 sec	06 sec
	101 Calls	00:02:10	00:02:01	00:02:53
Discontinued calls	999 Calls	0%	0%	1%
	101 Calls	23%	22%	21%
Max Delay in answering	999 Calls	00:03:10	00:03:02	00:03:38
	101 Calls	00:25:38	00:24:42	00:42:45
Number of 999/101 calls that do not result in an incident/crime		79,653	67,200	54,913
Percentage of 999/101 calls that do not result in an incident/crime		39.1%	38.0%	33.6%

2.18 As shown within the data above the average call answer time for 101 calls has increased in comparison to previous years, however there has been a decrease in discontinued calls.

2.19 The following graphs compare the volume of calls received by the Police Scotland Service Centre and the average speed of answer for both 999 and 101 calls.



2.20 As Police Scotland prioritises emergency responses the average speed of answer for 999 calls follows the general trend of 999 call demand. As a result the average speed of answer for 101 calls does not follow the 101 call demand trend.

Dispatch Times

2.21 As presented in the paper to the SPA Policing Performance Committee on 9 December 2021, STORM is the primary system used in the management of police incidents and resources. STORM captures data on the dispatching of incidents as well as updates to the status of resources. Dispatch times are automatically logged when a controller mobilises a resource to an incident.

- 2.22 The data available from STORM is used as Management Information only to determine incident management performance (dispatching a resource to an incident within anticipated timeframes) and is not available to publish. The arrival of a resource at the locus of an incident is recorded via a manual process and as a result is open to error, therefore response time data are unable to be provided.
- 2.23 The Modernised Contact and Engagement Programme recognise the requirement for more meaningful data and a key element of the Programme is the progression of the replacement of command and control systems. Work will commence at the conclusion of the Unified Communications and Contact Platform (UCCP) project, which will improve technology to enable calls to be answered anywhere across the Police Scotland estate.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no additional financial implications associated with this report.

4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no additional personnel implications associated with this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications associated with this paper.

6. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are reputational implications associated with this paper.
- 6.2 This is in recognition of the relationship between COVID-19 impacts on call answering times and the level on public trust and confidence.

7. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no social implications associated with this paper.

8. COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 8.1 There are community impact implications associated with this paper.

8.2 This is in recognition of the relationship between COVID-19 impacts on call answering times and the potential impact on communities in Scotland.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no equalities implications associated with this report.

10. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no environmental implications associated with this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are invited to discuss the content of this paper.