



Objective 1 (Responding to Emergencies) in the Police and Crime Plan

1. The Panel has asked some specific questions arising from its workshop and the following paragraphs of the report seek to address those points. Where appropriate, due to the operational nature, the Constabulary has been consulted on the response.

PANEL QUESTIONS: *Why has the PCC set a baseline target of 92% for 999 call-handling response, and how is the PCC holding the Constabulary to account with regard to achieving the target?*

2. The 'responding to emergencies' measures are published as a minimum standard. In common with all other measures, the Plan sets out a baseline from which performance is judged. The baseline is the average performance over the last 3 years. Constabulary performance against the measures is reported to my Accountability and Performance Panel meetings and published on my website.
3. The PCC's current performance management framework for the Police and Crime Plan moves away from quantitative targets to measuring improvement and considering direction of travel. Performance is considered in respect of a range of factors including qualitative narrative and levels of demand which supports an understanding of the reasons behind any apparent performance improvement or deterioration.
4. Latest reported performance relating to emergency call-handling 'answering a minimum of 90% of 999 emergency calls within ten seconds'¹ remains below the 3 year baseline of 92%, at 90.3%.

PANEL QUESTION: *What factors were taken into consideration in order to set the target?*

5. As explained above, this is not a target. It is a baseline to support improved direction of travel. The performance over previous years was considered to identify a measure that would be challenging, and would ensure continued focus on providing a high quality service. The measurement of trying to improve on the three year baseline ensures the Constabulary maintains close focus on performance in this area. It also encourages the force to identify opportunities for continuous improvement through improved technology and streamlining processes.

¹ 90% within 10 seconds is *also* the national standard

PANEL QUESTION: *To what extent is the 999 performance at the expense of the 'non-emergency' 101 call-handling performance?*

6. The current operational practice of prioritising emergency calls is necessary to effectively balance risk and resources. This means there are times when call-takers are focussed on answering 999 calls which can lengthen the time it takes to answer 101 non-emergency calls. This, of necessity, impacts on 101 call-handling performance.

PANEL QUESTION: *What is the resource implication of setting the target higher?*

7. The Constabulary currently plans call-handler staffing levels according to general demand patterns. However, emergency incidents are difficult to predict and can generate high numbers of calls simultaneously. In order to achieve a higher level of performance, the Contact and Control Room (CCR) would need to increase the number of staff dedicated to 999 calls 24hrs a day. Therefore to bridge the gap between resources and demand, the CCR regularly ring fences call-handlers for emergency calls only.
8. There is a sufficient number of qualified and competent staff in the CCR to effectively manage 999 calls.
9. Analysis was carried out as part of the Suffolk Local Policing Review to fully understand current demand, predict future demand and therefore deploy resources effectively. This identified that further work was required to reduce the demand coming in to the CCR (especially from non-policing enquiries) and a review of staffing levels was required. It is recognised that, compared with five years ago, the calls are more complex and CCR staff have to carry out more checks across police systems, and for vulnerability, and therefore calls take longer to resolve. It is important to note that HMIC commented favourably on the quality of the call-taking and the levels of care, empathy and thoroughness of the calls should not be compromised by the need to 'wrap up' calls quickly.
10. As with other call centre environments, the CCR faces challenges in retaining staff. Turnover is traditionally high. The level of vacancies has been compounded recently by CCR staff being selected for other roles in the organisational restructure. The Constabulary is currently recruiting a sufficient number of call-takers to fill these vacancies.
11. Whilst not a Police and Crime Plan performance measure, the Constabulary regularly reports information relating to 101 call-handling. It has considered options for reviewing the 101 call measure, for example one proposal is to align the standard for 101 call-handling with that of the 111 service i.e. 90% of calls answered within 1 minute. However, it was decided to continue with the current measure until further analysis had been conducted.
12. A review of the CCR will be undertaken throughout July and August 2016. This review will be supported by a peer review by a Superintendent from Kent Police who sits on a national CCR demand reduction working group. The review will result in evidenced based recommendations to ensure the CCR continues to have the capacity and capability to deal with emergency, and non-emergency, demand effectively.

PANEL QUESTION: *In light of terrorism incidents in Paris, Brussels, etc. how sufficient is the resource available to deal effectively with major incidents in Suffolk, and how is the PCC holding the Constabulary to account in this regard?*

13. The Constabulary is proactive in its approach to both preventing, and being in a position to deal with, major incidents. This type of operation would present significant challenges and a multi-agency response would be required.
14. The Constabulary has operational plans in place which set out the immediate response to a terrorist attack. These have been developed with partners from other emergency services and the Suffolk Resilience Forum. Briefing sessions have been delivered to front line responders and effective systems enable information to be managed as effectively as possible.
15. The Constabulary has organised and attended regional meetings to ensure eastern region forces can support each other and joint working protocols have been drawn up. Suffolk Constabulary is effectively engaged in the national Joint Emergency Services Integration Programme (JESIP). In addition, the Constabulary has been involved in exercises to ensure our approach is effective.
16. The level of armed assets in the county is sufficient with regard to the threat presented. This is kept under constant review. The level is in line with the requirement for Suffolk set out in the national Strategic Policing Requirement.
17. It is the responsibility of the PCC and Chief Constable to meet obligations outlined in the Strategic Policing Requirement. The Constabulary reports to the Accountability and Performance Panel on how the requirements are met.

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