



## **WEST YORKSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL**

**12<sup>th</sup> June 2020**

### **Customer Contact Centre and Call Handling Update**

#### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 To provide Panel members with an update on the Customer Contact Centre (CCC) and call handling as requested at the 13 September 2019 meeting.

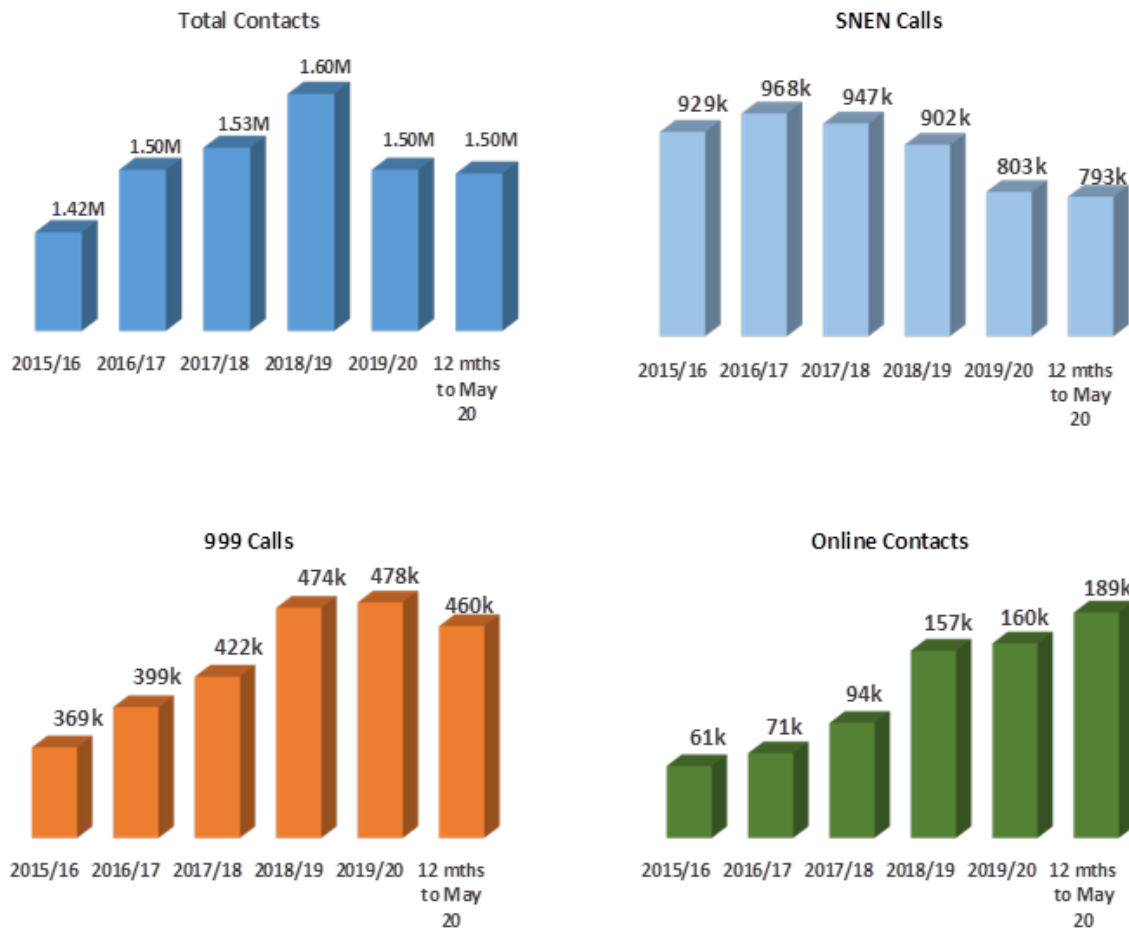
#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) has provided regular updates to the Police and Crime Panel on Customer Contact Centre performance. Since the last paper considered at the 14 September 2018 meeting, there has been ongoing dialogue with Panel members during 2019 meetings. Prior to this the Police and Crime Panel considered a report at the 15 September 2017 meeting and update reports have previously been provided at the meetings on 10 March 2017 and 16 December 2016.
- 2.2 Within the PCC's governance arrangements call handling is routinely considered as part of the Delivery Quarterly process and through discussion at the PCC/WYP Bilat meetings. During the Covid pandemic, extraordinary Bilat arrangements have been agreed with meetings weekly, providing a regular opportunity to discuss current demand and resource management where necessary.
- 2.3 Call handling has faced some challenges over the last few years with increases in demand, initially, and then a "levelling out" of demand on 101, in fact a reduction over the last 12 months, but an increase in 999 calls and on-line contacts (as well as call complexity) that has more than compensated for the demand drop in 101
- 2.4 It should be noted that WYP have not abandoned a single 999 call in 32 months, when a number of other police forces in the last 12-18 months have had concerns around their critical risk 999 performance and service delivery.

#### **3. Demand Overview**

- 3.1 In 2018/19 West Yorkshire Police reported unprecedented demand from the public for our services. During the 12 months to March 2019 WYP received over 1.6million contacts from the public. This means they received an average of 182 contacts from the public every hour of the day, 20 additional calls each hour compared to 2015/16.
- 3.2 Demand from the public for an emergency response remains at an all-time high and West Yorkshire Police received 478,000 999 calls during 2019/20. This is over 1,300

999 calls each day however WYP continue to answer all these calls and the average waiting time for a 999 caller is just 5 seconds.



#### 4. Non-emergency Call Handling Performance

4.1 Reducing the waiting time for non-emergency callers has been a priority for West Yorkshire and a number of actions have been taken to improve the service for Non-Emergency Callers including:

**4.2.1 Intensive recruitment & retention campaign.** Since the new Contact model went live in October 2018, staffing within the Initial Contact (IC) function has been depleted at times due to both available budgets and demand, negatively affecting non-emergency performance. This is a national issue that has received media attention across the country with most forces expressing a concern at lower performance on 101 than they would like to see, and some on their 999 service as previously mentioned.

**4.2.2** Whilst the majority of IC agents leaving the contact centre move to other roles within WYP, this has meant the planned actual headcount for the centre has not met budgeted numbers. In response the Demand Management Review recruitment plan has been reviewed and a new version designed which doubled the original numbers to be recruited between July and December 2019.

- 4.2.3** Where operationally necessary, some IC agents who had already successfully applied for other roles within WYP have been temporarily retained until the staffing situation improved. Part-time, flexible and job-share working has been reintroduced to appeal to a more diverse potential workforce, most of whom will be looking for a stable employment opportunity. Recruitment processes for retiring or recently retired colleagues have been streamlined to expedite their return to the function, enhancing our numbers but also taking advantage of their experience and skills.
- 4.3 Tenure.** The concept of a 2-year tenured period for new Initial Contact (IC) agents has been scoped, consulted upon and agreed for implementation. This means that new CMC agents will not be able to successfully move into other WYP roles until they have completed 2 years within Initial Contact. A policy document, plus contracts of employment have now been finalised and were presented to JNCC in March for future staffing intakes. It is expected this will have an incremental effect on stabilising the IC function, in terms of numbers, experience and skills, leading to an improved level of service for callers and a reduced demand on other force departments (People, Vetting, and Training) which is important given the incoming police officer recruitment upsurge.
- 4.3.2** To assist with this and to make tenure more attractive to new recruits, WYP will be re-introducing their apprenticeship scheme for new starters, enabling accreditation to be achieved in the role within the first 12-18 months of employment with the organisation, 2 successful pilots have been run with apprentices already in the last 18 months.
- 4.4 Overtime.** The option to agree with current staff extended shifts and Rest Day working were utilised during June-August 2019 to ensure adequate staffing levels. The supplementing of daily staffing via overtime in the IC function is now minimal.
- 4.5 Management of ‘avoidable demand’.** A proportion of 101 calls are made to obtain updates on ongoing crime investigations or chase attendance at incidents. For the former, local crime tracker is now being utilised by more members of the public and shows a healthy year on year increase on the number of ‘hits’ between 2018/19 and 2019/20. For the latter, WYP are performance managing the dispatch function to ensure that priority calls requiring physical deployment are re-contacted to update, inform and reassure and also to re-assess the need to deploy. This should lead to a more effective and efficient use of resources and an increase in public satisfaction. Internally, WYP colleagues have been reminded that the 101 function should not be used as a switchboard facility.
- 4.5.2** A deep dive review of calls utilising auditors will enable WYP to determine actual demand “as is” but also benchmark against previous work in this area to identify progress and shortfalls. This significant piece work has been shared with a number of other police forces and identified as best practice in determining what demand looks like in reality.
- 4.6.3** There is a continued push to advertise on-line options and the ‘Ask the Police’ website to ensure that appropriate enquiries can be more effectively resolved. All this effort to manage down demand is reducing the volume of 101 calls into the organisation.

## **5. Performance Management**

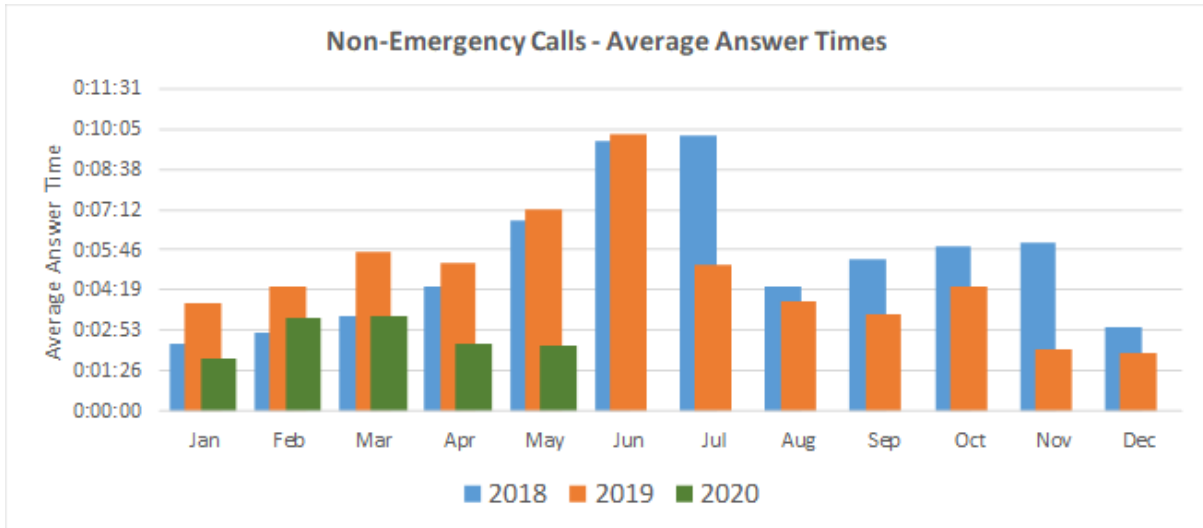
**5.1** Increased local scrutiny and management around individual and team performance for calls handled per hour has resulted in improvements. It is though important to note that there is now an increased number of inexperienced staff in the control room, and their call handling performance will take time to develop. In addition, staff have been asked to undertake a more thorough assessment of calls for risk/harm prior to sending them through to dispatch. Staff will also manage conversations with other agencies to resolve without deployment (hospital absconders, welfare checks etc) as part of overall demand reduction, therefore the average time per call can be longer than previously. These plans and changes should work to better protect the available front-line resource.

**5.2 Additional considerations/ next steps:**

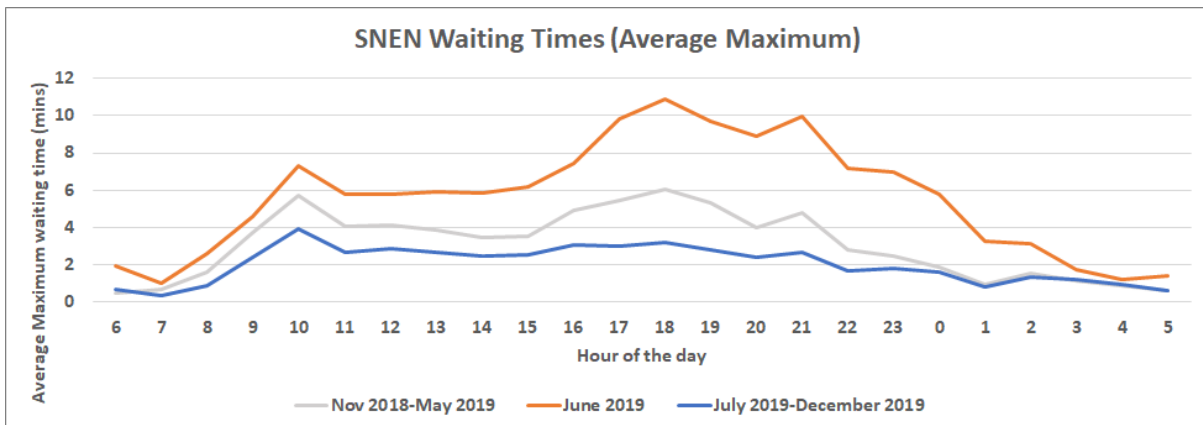
Improved performance in answering 101 calls has led to an increase in incidents for the force to deal with and resolve. This helps to reduce the number of potential threats and risk of harm incidents that are missed through non-answering. With an increase in incidents to be resolved, WYP have also re-designed processes within the Incident Management Unit which has led to a significant decrease in the total daily volume of outstanding calls as they aim to resolve more without deployment. This will continue to be a consideration as WYP aim to continually improve the number of calls abandoned.

- Forensic understanding of demand: performance data shows that a significant percentage of abandoned calls is within 60 seconds and higher still when looking at abandoned within 5 minutes. Contact Centre staff are working with telephony and Vodafone to identify numbers and conduct ring-backs to 'survey' callers and enquire as to the original reason for calling and why they abandoned within that timeframe.
- The recorded message (which lasts 1m 30 secs) explains on-line options early on so it is feasible that abandonment occurs in favour of website resolution but this needs to be confirmed via analysis. Also working with Corporate Services to incorporate this into the substantive survey questionnaires.
- Work commencing to scope the re-design of the recorded message which may appropriately divert relevant demand to other agencies.
- Procurement process ongoing for new telephony and Customer Management systems which will help us to better identify and resolve caller/incident demand.

**5.3** The chart across reports the monthly average answer times for non-emergency calls in 2018, 2019 and 2020. Efforts to reduce the non-emergency call answer times are now having a positive effect.



5.4 The chart below shows the average maximum waiting time each hour of the day. Since July 2019 the average maximum waiting time has fallen across the 24 hour period.



5.5 WYP will continue to target the 0900-1100 and 1600-1900 periods with additional staffing where possible, so that peak demand times are mitigated against.

## 6 Impact of Covid-19 – March 2020

6.1 The contents of this report have been affected by the current Coronavirus issues that are impacting on BT performance and National Police call handling, however WYP and the PCC are monitoring this position closely. The PCC receives regular updates on performance and demand across WYP functions including the contact centre as part of new bilateral meeting governance arrangements and this will also be considered at the planned Community Outcomes ‘Lite’ meeting in June.

6.4 A review group for Covid-19 response with WYP as the lead force, has been set up, consisting of 5 regional partner forces to benchmark where West Yorkshire stand against regional performance as well as to learn from each other, and where possible support other policing areas from our National “buddy” force principle in terms of 999.

6.3 BT are already in business continuity mode at points due to an increases in their calls to 999/112 mainly during the evening and at weekends.

## 7 Current 999 and 101 answer times and abandoned rate

Month	Ave 9s Q time	Ave SNEN Q Time
March 2020	5 seconds	202 seconds
April 2020	4.3 seconds	146 seconds
May 2020	4.2 seconds	98 seconds

- 7.1 To assist with managing demand and also to offer a better service to the public, in early April WYP introduced an C19 breach form and at the end of the month, the opportunity to report Domestic Abuse online (obviously on a non-emergency basis).
- 7.2 This has helped WYP to manage demand more effectively and despite a high number of staff self-isolating at points, they have been able to accommodate a number of staff working from home on email and web-chat based work, as well as setting up a Welfare Hub using self-isolating staff to assist us in managing abstractions.
- 7.3 WYP have also made use of police buildings to set up alternative contact centres to assist with social distancing.

### On-line contacts during the last 3 months:

Month	Volumes
Feb 2020	12,229
March 2020	15,020
April 2020	35,561

- 7.4 WYP are hoping to maintain this increase in online engagement as the pandemic eases. It should be noted though that the C19 Breach forms are particularly popular with 15,071 of these reports received in April, the online form allows the report to be handled in slow time, and frees up time on the phone lines. The impact of this potential additional demand cannot be underestimated in the current climate.

### Comparator of improvements made 2018- to date

Date	SNEN average Queue time		9s average queue time	9s abandoned rate	101 abandoned rate	Volume of on-line transactions
October 2018	351 seconds		5.2 seconds	0%	24.1%	13911
November 2018	361 seconds		5.3 seconds	0%	23.4%	12661
December 2018	187 seconds		4.8 seconds	0%	13%	9720
January 2019	231 seconds		4.6 seconds	0%	16%	12298
February 2019	274 seconds		5.1 seconds	0%	17.2%	16206
March 2019	314 seconds		5.6 seconds	0%	24%	13016
April 2019	312 seconds		5.4 seconds	0%	23.7%	16689
		Improvement 2018/19 to 2019/20				
October 2019	271 seconds	80 seconds	5.4 seconds	0%	17.4%	13812
November 2019	132 seconds	229 seconds	4.8 seconds	0%	9.1%	12266
December 2019	159 seconds	28 seconds	5.2 seconds	0%	8.9%	10621
January 2020	113 seconds	118 seconds	4.9 seconds	0%	11%	12805
February 2020	198 seconds	76 seconds	5.1 seconds	0%	12.3%	12229
March 2020	202 seconds	112 seconds	5 seconds	0%	11.8%	15020
April 2020	98 seconds	214 seconds	4.3 seconds	0%	9.28%	35561

**Key facts:**

- Last abandoned a 999 call in June 2017.
- First police force to introduce web-chat and most online options available by any force, introduced on-line suspicious behaviour/drug dealing due to requests from the public and Neighbourhood Watch groups and introducing an obstructive parking form by end of Feb 2020. Always looking for ways to make contact with the Police easier and importantly that contact is directed to the best possible source of response or self-serve.
- On-line options superior to that of Single on-line Home and cheaper, plus more options than SOH currently, this acknowledged by Home Office and listening to communities to add to these options where practicable,
- Embedded Ask the Police in May 2019 allowing the public to better find information that they may need without the need for a call to us – an average of 1742 contacts per month
- Improving our recruiting and retention to maintain and build on successful performance
- In procurement for new telephony/Command and Control system/ Customer Records Management system (CRM) to assist call handlers and Dispatch staff in more effective and timely call handling
- Scoping workforce management system options to enable better forecasting and planning of staff resources

**C19**

- Introduced additional contact options such as C19 breach form, domestic abuse on-line form
- Opened up alternative contact centres and shielding Hub to enable business as usual
- In addition to current working from home solutions, currently working up a call handling solution that may allow 101 calls to be handled from home in time
- WYP currently have a team of contact centre staff as well as self- isolating staff from other units completing some work on avoidable demand, once they can establish what this demand is made up of, WYP can introduce ways to help to reduce it, C19 has allowed them this opportunity