



STRATEGIC POLICING AND CRIME BOARD
18th July 2017

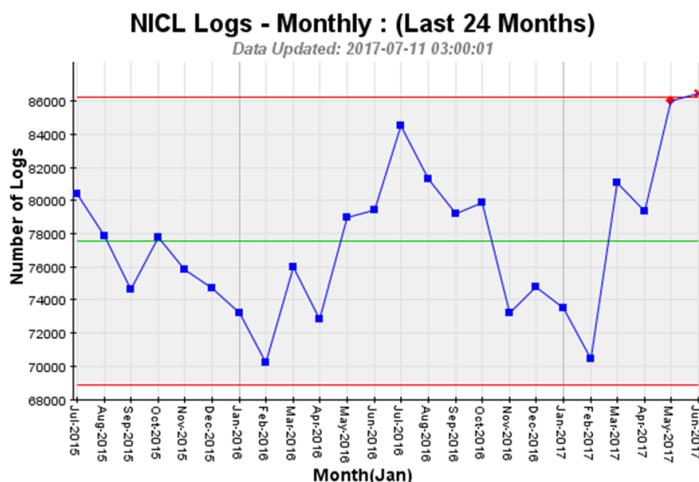
ACCESS TO SERVICES

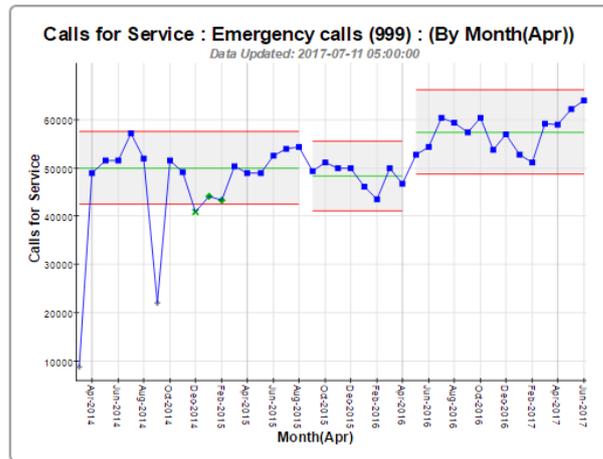
PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Strategic Police and Crime Board on the performance of the Force Contact and Force Response departments and to provide some information on the progress of aspects of the Digital Experience for Citizens project.

BACKGROUND

- 2. To give some context to the performance updates in this report it is important to provide some clarity on the current challenges faced by West Midlands Police. The levels of demand the force is currently facing are far higher than anticipated for 2016-17 which has manifested itself in very high levels of 999 calls, 101 calls, incident logs and recording of volume crime.
- 3. The volumes of both calls for service and volume of logs created in June both saw record levels, with close to 64,000 emergency calls received and more than 15,000 logs created that required an immediate response as shown in the below figures.





4. This has then culminated in the weekend of 17th/18th June when the force faced unprecedented levels of calls for service, in excess of those experienced on New Year's Eve. Call levels have not stabilised since this time and demand continues to increase.
5. The force also faced a challenging period in the wake of the recent terror attacks and the increase of the national security state to Critical which required a significant uplift in visible policing for reassurance and deterrence.

MANAGING DEMAND

6. During the period following the recent terrorist attacks, in addition to dealing with the specific response to the threats, a dedicated lead (Mission Support Superintendent) was appointed to identify and allocate resources to continue to manage business-as-usual calls for service.
7. In addition, officers and staff from the Force Criminal Investigation Department (FCID), Public Protection Unit (PPU) and neighbourhood teams have supplemented Response resources in responding directly to P3 incidents. In particular PPU & FCID have trialled a dedicated domestic abuse response.
8. West Midlands Police plans to respond to anticipated increased demand over the summer. This increase generally coincides with the school holiday period but this year the warmer weather and national terror attacks have contributed to this occurring much earlier. The force has therefore instigated its planned response several weeks early. This response, led by an Assistant Chief Constable, with a defined Gold, Silver, Bronze command structure, includes additional resources from FCID, PPU and NPU's dedicated to dealing with calls for service. The summer demand plan includes a range of tactical options which enable Mission Support (with oversight of the force resource and demand) to adjust the level of response to incidents based upon threat, risk and harm. Activity is driven through the three times daily force management meeting.
9. To ensure the forcewide response to calls for service and volume crime at this time of exceptional demand, a force Service Improvement Meeting has been implemented. This is a weekly meeting, chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable, where local policing and departmental leads are held to account for:
 - Managing and Reducing Demand

- Responding to calls for service
- Preventing Crime and Bringing Offenders to Justice

This meeting has overseen the delivery of a series of All Out Days where force resources from all areas, teams and departments have worked to bring outstanding offenders to justice and address outstanding calls for service. The latest event on Tuesday July 11th resulted in 100 additional arrests and the resolution of 500 additional incident logs.

FORCE CONTACT PERFORMANCE (EXTERNAL)

10. The Service Level Agreement (SLA) for Force Contact external call handling function is to answer 90% of calls for service within 10 seconds for Emergency (999) calls and 30 seconds for Non-Emergency Calls.
11. The following table sets out the performance of Force Contact over the last calendar year broken down into six month periods.

Performance for July 2016 - December 2016		
	Emergency	Non-Emergency
SLA Target	90%	90%
SLA Achieved (Average for period)	81%	34%
Total Calls for Service	347,738	763,671
Abandoned Calls	9,202 <small>(Abandoned after 10 second Threshold)</small>	176,327 <small>(Abandoned after 30 second Threshold)</small>

12. It can be seen that performance over the year has improved against the SLA for answering 999 calls within 10 seconds and there has been a significant reduction in the number of abandoned 999 calls. This is reflective of a conscious decision by the force to prioritise the answering of 999 calls.
13. It can be seen from the figures that this has been to the slight detriment of the 101 call handling function with a decrease in performance against the SLA for 101 and an increase in abandoned calls for the second half of the year. This is against a background of ever increasing demand.

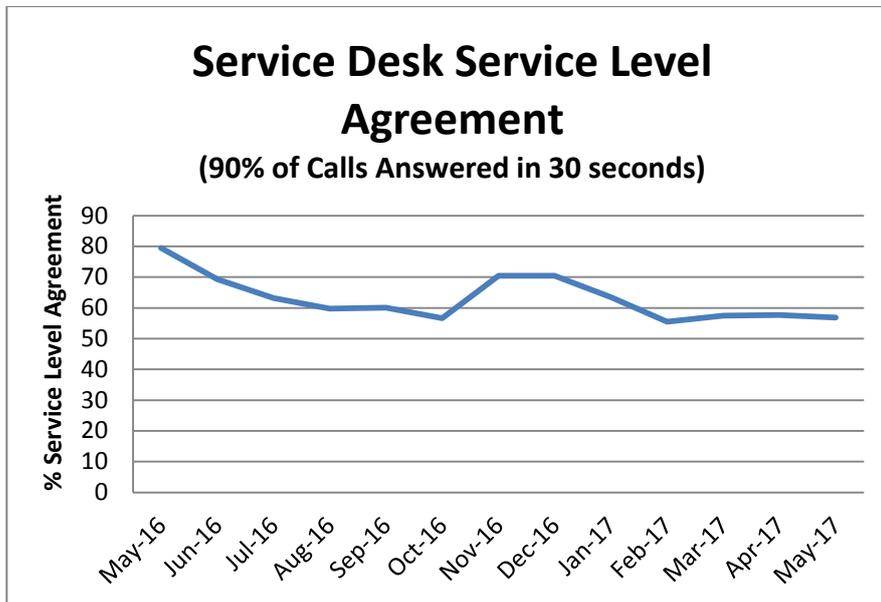
Performance for January 2017 - June 2017		
	Emergency	Non-Emergency
SLA Target	90%	90%
SLA Achieved (Average for period)	84%	27%
Total Calls for Service	347,492	758,514
Abandoned Calls	5,273 (Abandoned after 10 second Threshold)	220,255 (Abandoned after 30 second Threshold)

14. Another factor having an impact on 101 performance is that the average call handling time has continued to rise over recent years (a rise that is reflected nationally). A recent demand analysis has shown some contributory factors for this increase.
- a. Vehicle crime, missing person reports and anti-social behaviour have all increased over the last 12 months. These are longer calls due to requirements to capture information, assess investigative opportunities and assess risk at the earliest opportunity.
 - b. Visitors to unstaffed locations, including delivery drivers, are inappropriately using the emergency intercom which directly connects to 101.
 - c. Visitors to the new custody blocks are calling 101 rather than the custody number provided.
 - d. Officers and staff are not always providing direct contact details to members of the public resulting in additional call demand when victims and witnesses call in for an update.
 - e. Claire's Law and Sarah's Law result in long evidential calls, which can occupy a contact officer for approximately two hours at a time.
 - f. The implementation of the revised version of the Victims' Code has resulted in additional offline activity for Contact Officers, reducing the time that they are available to answer calls.
15. There is a comprehensive action plan in place within Force Contact to manage a number of these issues and the wider support of other teams within WMP has been sought to progress the recommendations arising from this analysis.
16. Force Contact continues to work with the Corporate Communications Department to deliver public messaging about the responsible use of 999 and 101 with advice on alternative means of contact and diversion to partner agencies where appropriate.

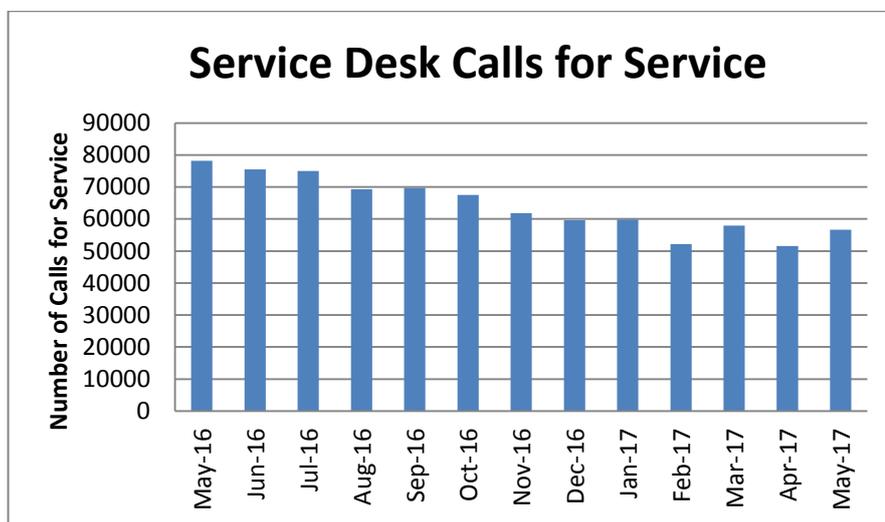
FORCE CONTACT PERFORMANCE (INTERNAL)

17. Operatives from the Service Desk are the first to provide support to the 999 call handling function at times of peak demand which degrades the Service Desk's ability to meet its SLA of answering 90% of calls from WMP staff within 30 seconds. This was a

conscious decision by Force Contact to use staff from the Service Desk initially, in an attempt to have the least impact on service delivery to the public. The below chart highlights this performance.



18. Calls to the service desk have been decreasing over the last year, partially due to the introduction of mobile devices meaning that officers can update logs from their device without calling the Service Desk. As more critical Apps come online such as eSearch and PNC it is anticipated that this demand will reduce further.



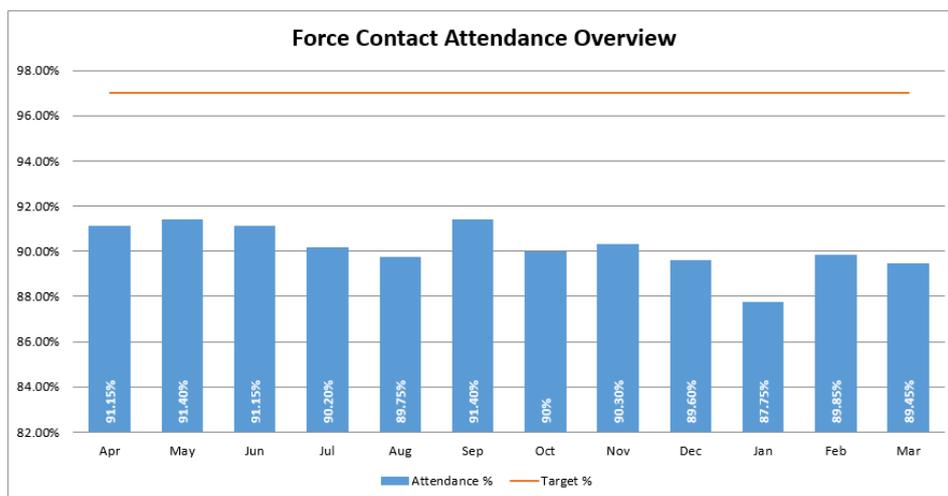
FORCE CONTACT RECRUITMENT

19. In February 2017 Force Contact was carrying 146 vacancies from an establishment of 913. Following an intensive recruitment campaign led by People and Organisational Development (POD), as of June 2017, Force Contact had reduced this to 51 vacancies across the department, a significant improvement.

20. Further work is being undertaken by POD to bring the department up to strength and to routinely recruit above establishment so as to more effectively mitigate anticipated attrition. This has included the transfer of 30 Police Constables into the department to initially support the 999 call handling function and eventually be trained as dispatchers. 21 have already commenced training with others arriving by the end of July.
21. Force Contact is working closely with the Learning and Development department to support the training of new recruits into the department. All IT courses have been planned in against the proposed recruitment schedule. Work has also been undertaken to refine the internal training programme to deliver a high quality training package over a much shorter period of time enabling quicker release of new staff into the operational environment.
22. New recruits joining the organisation as Contact Handlers will be 'Operationally Competent' within 11 weeks of joining the organisation. Recruits will, however, begin to deal with 'live demand' from their 5th week when they start with the training office. As recruits work through their training plan the ratio of learning coaches to recruits decreases. Recruits and learning coaches now also work across a number of shifts to ensure that they are supporting operational needs as well as ensuring they are sufficiently trained.
23. New recruits joining the organisation as dispatchers will take a longer period of time to become operationally competent due to the different functions within dispatch (Service Desk, Dispatch Support and Dispatcher) however, in a similar way to contact handling, dispatchers will be dealing with live demand throughout their training and will be released as 'Operationally Competent' within 6 months of joining the organisation.
24. Our intensive recruitment continues and it is anticipated that Contact Handling will be at full working strength establishment by November and Dispatch will be at full working strength in the early part of 2018.

FORCE CONTACT ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT

25. Average attendance for the 2016/2017 financial year was 90% against a force attendance target of 97%. The below chart shows the overall attendance rate for all officers and staff in the department. The average attendance rate for police officers is 89% and for Police Staff 92%.



26. Half of the staff currently on sick leave are on longer term sick leave (over 30 days); the majority of these staff are suffering with either stress / anxiety or musculoskeletal illnesses.
27. Recent analysis of trends in sickness levels demonstrate a correlation between an increase in sickness and periods of change in the department or other factors that may impact upon morale such as the running of preferencing processes and periods of high demand.
28. The Force Contact senior leadership team continues to work closely with the WMP Head of Wellbeing to manage and improve levels of attendance.

FORCE CONTACT LEAVE MANAGEMENT

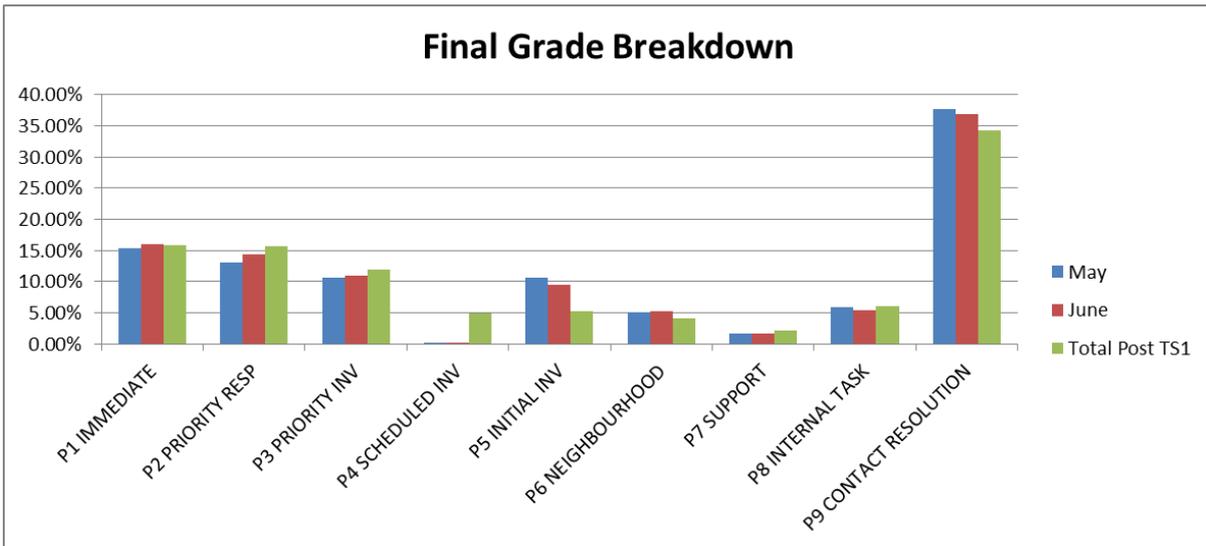
29. During times of peak demand the department has struggled to meet all annual leave requests when initially submitted by staff. By the end of March 2017, 96.4% of leave for the 2016/2017 leave year had been booked across Force Contact and, by the end of March 2017, 60% of annual leave had already been booked for the 2017/2018 leave period.
30. As new members of staff are brought into the department and become operationally competent this will start to alleviate this issue, although, at times of peak demand this can be challenging to manage. 70% of the leave refused in May within Contact Handling was for leave during June, July, August and September 2017, i.e. the peak summer demand period.

UPDATE ON FORCE CONTACT CHANGE PROGRAMMES AND NEW WORKING PRACTICES

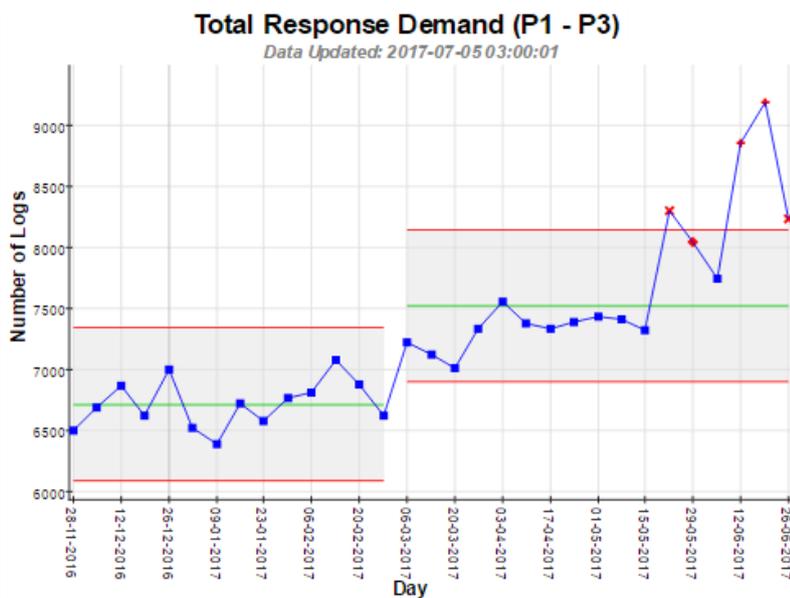
31. Force Contact has 'up-skilled' existing staff in order for previous non-emergency staff to be able to take 999 calls and previous emergency call handlers to take 101 calls. Over 90% of call handling staff are now trained to take both 999 and 101 calls (those still to be trained are currently on maternity leave or long term sick).
32. As part of the Force Contact restructure, the number of control rooms reduced from five to three. This has enabled greater resilience during the challenging staffing issues that Contact has faced while also enabling demand across the force to be understood and prioritised in a more consistent manner. Force Contact is also reducing the amount of airwave talkgroups being used. The first talkgroup merger saw Coventry and Solihull talkgroups combine. The final remaining merger will see the 2 talkgroups used on Birmingham West NPU combine over the next month. The mergers are enabling Response to operate more as intended; as a single, borderless Response team with a more agile and responsive service.
33. There are two key pieces of work on-going as part of the Digital Experience for Citizens (DEC) project which are anticipated to reduce demand on the Contact Handling functions. These are Individual Voice Recognition (IVR) and the development of a Web Portal.

FORCE RESPONSE PERFORMANCE

34. When the Force Response department was formed in November 2017, as part of Transition State One (TS1) of the WMP2020 Programme, the incident grading framework also changed, making a straight comparison of performance pre and post-TS1 challenging.
35. There are now nine grading profiles that are used by WMP with Force Response primarily supporting P1-3 grades. The following chart shows the distribution of demand for each grade. The percentage of total logs created that fall into P1-3 is approx. 40%.



36. The overall number of P1 to P3 logs created has continued to increase since December 2016 as can be seen in the chart overleaf. The demand in the last three weeks has been significant with log volumes breaching the upper control limit.



37. The below dials show the performance of Force Response for June 2017 against the SLAs of 90% attendance within 15 mins for P1 incidents, of 90% attendance within 60 mins for P2 incidents and 90% attendance within 8 hours for P3 incidents.



38. Performance against these three grades has deteriorated to its lowest point since the grades were introduced at TS1 and, although not directly comparable, also since performance pre-TS1.

39. There are a number of factors that are affecting the ability of Force Response to meet the SLA targets around P1 and P2 incidents. Most significant is the substantial increase in demand for policing services across the region. It has also been a challenge maintaining the required fully operational Force Response staffing levels, and the benefits realised from mobility technology and other organisational changes have, to date, been insufficient to bridge the increased demand.

40. Whilst there has been a small reduction in the establishment of Response, the function has a substantially refined mission and should reap the benefits and economies of a more mobile, agile work force deployed across neighbourhood boundaries. Sustained austerity, resultant in no recruitment for over 6 years, has meant that strength is below establishment. Despite efforts to minimise the number of officers with restrictions in response teams, there remains a shortfall in the number of deployable operational officers.

41. It is anticipated that by making Force Response officers more mobile and by making IT systems more accessible via their mobile devices, there will be less need for them to return to stations to complete various tasks. After the initial issue of the devices with a small number of Apps, progress on the next release of Apps has been slower than expected due to difficulties in the recruitment of specialist technical staff. A number of the Apps that will make a substantial change to the way in which Force Response officers operate are nearing delivery and these will bring sizeable efficiency gains in terms of preventing officers from returning to the station or enabling them to complete transactions themselves.

42. The single biggest factor that has had an effect on response rates is demand. Whilst the number of P1 and P2 incidents attended outside of the SLA times has increased, the actual number of P1 and P2 incidents has gone up by significantly more. This means that even though officers attend far more P1 incidents within the 15 minutes than before in terms of the sheer number, the attendance rate has decreased. This drop off in the attendance rate can be attributed to the rise in demand. Whilst the SLAs remain very challenging, the productivity gains secured by Force Response since TS1 should be recognised, as should the commitment of the department's staff in the face of the substantial increase in demand.

43. To address the challenge, a number of steps have been taken and there is an on-going plan to bring in other changes. The force has made significant progress in recruitment of officers this year with nearly 300 trainees allocated places on our training programme. Classes of up to 40 student officers start each month for the foreseeable future. Progress is closely monitored by the Executive Team. Additionally, the force has a plan in place to attract up to 100 transferee officers and, unless they have a particular skill set (e.g. firearms, public protection or investigation) the vast majority of them will be posted into Force Response. As student officers complete their training, again, the majority of them will be deployed into Force Response.
44. Addressing the resourcing gap and releasing the mobile Apps will inevitably help to improve response rates. The issue of demand is more complex and demonstrates what a challenging environment the force is currently operating in. Whilst it may be tempting to consider moving staff from functions where responding to calls for service is not the primary focus, it is Intervention and Prevention that will enable us to reduce demand, thus improving our ability to meet the SLA attendance targets.

CONCLUSION

45. West Midlands Police is working hard to meet current and projected levels of demand, to exploit available technology and processes to ensure efficient use of resources and to continue to recruit personnel into the force to fill vacancies.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

46. None apparent.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

47. None apparent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

48. The board is requested to note the content of this report.

ACC Marcus Beale
Operations Portfolio