Identifying and supporting vulnerable repeat callers via 999 or 101

Structured analysis of police contacts in the control room to identify vulnerable repeat callers and signpost them to relevant agencies.

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Key details

Does it work?	Untested – new or innovative
Focus	Diversion
Topic	Criminal justice Vulnerability and safeguarding
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Region	South East
Partners	Police Community safety partnership Health services
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.

Key details

Start date	July 2018
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Adults

Aim

To manage the increasing contact of vulnerable, repeat and nuisance callers, Kent police have reviewed and further developed processes to manage this contact effectively.

The increasing level of contact diverts police away from members of the public who may be in life threatening situations and who need urgent help. These calls also affect the capability of wider policing resources to respond. To manage this, the aim was to:

- identify vulnerable repeat callers to Kent police
- ensure appropriate safeguarding for those vulnerable callers
- reduce the impact of these callers on the force and as such on the public

Intended outcome

- identification of vulnerable repeat callers
- safeguarding of vulnerable repeat callers
- reducing the number of calls to the control room from repeat callers, meaning quicker responses to genuine calls for service

Description

This practice is also known as Operation Engage.

Force control room central coordinator role

A force control room central coordinator was appointed. The Operation Engage working practice was designed and published on the force's intranet system. The force control room central

coordinator was an abstraction of a member of staff who was a contact handler.

The central coordinator's role is to:

- organise all vulnerable repeat callers into the emergency, non-emergency, digital desks and force central switchboard, through robust monitoring processes introduced via a tag within the command-and-control system, Power BI, and reports generated from the force analysts
- oversee the automatic systems in place to identify vulnerable repeat callers, including updates with ICCS (integrated command and control system) where a known repeat/vulnerable caller is highlighted on the initial call, providing clear guidance for contact handlers on how to manage call effectively
- Coordinate the progress of vulnerable repeat callers referred to the relevant community safety unit through use of updates within local intelligence databases, attendance to vulnerability panels and any relevant partnership meetings including high intensity user groups and collaboration with the force mental health team.
- assess the threat, harm and risk of each individual case to identify how BT blocks can be introduced to support with demand and update guidance against individual address and phone numbers so that blocks can be implemented at the earliest opportunity

Operation engage inspector

- to support the coordinator a Police Inspector or Civilian staff equivalent is allocated the Operation Engage workstream, alongside other projects
- the role is to oversee and support with workload, review and implement further working practices, including completion of an equality impact assessment, attending and chair a tri–service meetings with fire and ambulance, allowing for a co-ordinated approach to safeguarding vulnerable adults and support in reducing demand
- authorise the use of blocks within the emergency/other lines where the threat, harm risk indicates this is suitable

No specific funding was required to procure these staff members, but there were financial implications when backfilling their role.

Automated system for identifying vulnerable repeat callers

Operation Engage uses an automated system called BusinessObjects. This is used to cross-examine various call handling systems within the control room. BusinessObjects was a product the force already owned and as such did not require additional funding. This provides an overall profile of the caller – such as the frequency of calls, the day and time of the calls and the subject of the calls. These profiles help to identify vulnerable repeat callers.

These call handling systems include:

- a command and control system
- call recording software
- an automatic call distributor
- a Power BI

Command and control system

This is used to record the details of a call. It's a manual entry system where contact handlers type in the name, location, telephone number and details of an incident. These records are then used to record actions taken and any result. Various systems are available, but Kent police use a product called Storm.

Red Box call recording software

This system automatically records phone calls in and out of the control room, as well as radio transmissions. Each recording is logged in the system with the times and telephone numbers.

Automatic call distributor (ACD)

This is a system that receives a call to the control room and passes it to the next available contact handler.

Power BI – data visualisation and business intelligence tool

Used to transform data from various sources to analyse trends, track contact to support in making data – driven decisions on managing individuals contact.

Criteria for repeat callers

The criteria for a repeat caller in line with the Operation Engage protocols, is someone calling the police (through 999 or 101) five or more times in a day or 10 or more times in a rolling seven days.

When a repeat caller is identified, the nature of their calls is reviewed to assess whether the caller is a repeatedly targeted victim or a vulnerable repeat caller.

Individuals identified as repeatedly targeted victims are not managed through the vulnerable repeat caller's process. They may still be referred to the force's community safety unit and other specialist departments.

Neighbourhood policing teams

The threshold for vulnerable repeat contacts to be referred to the community safety unit (CSU) within neighbourhood policing will vary depending on an individual's situation, taking their vulnerabilities into consideration.

CSU's are departments across the force area existing in most Kent police stations. Their coverage is for the full county.

Most callers' names and addresses are provided or can be identified. These details are used to establish which of the CSUs repeat callers should be allocated to if appropriate.

Staff from the CSU manage the repeat callers with appropriate action depending on need. This involves a range of tactics including:

- personal visits
- liaising with partner agencies, local GP's, social services and mental health departments
- bespoke response plans
- acceptable behaviour agreements
- community protection warnings (CPW)
- community protection notice (CPN)
- enforcement through courts

There have been more than 200 repeat caller referrals for intervention and support to the CSUs since the implementation of OP engage and the beginning of the operation. Callers are discussed at morning and monthly performance meetings.

Overall impact

Intervention has led to early identification of vulnerable repeat callers. This early identification and engagement has led to callers receiving the correct assistance and signposting.

Denial of service to the public had the biggest impact. Kent police were less able to answer other emergency calls when dealing with vulnerable repeat callers. Managing nuisance and hoax calls involves staffing increases, which in turn has a financial impact.

The operation engage team within Kent police is currently managing more than 230 repeat callers and has seen a significant reduction of contact from those identified. The process leading to Kent police is more accessible for those who require a genuine police response, saving a significant amount of contact handling hours a month.

Learning

Coordinator role

It's vital to use a coordinator who understands both the:

- control room processes
- processes of the practitioners engaging with callers

The Kent police coordinator has continued to develop working relationships with practitioners, as well as those from partner agencies. They also maintain a working knowledge of the callers, leading to continued momentum of the operation.

If the role were to become permanent it would require an in-force selection process. It is currently filled by secondment opportunities with Kent police.

Analytical products

The main challenges were around the analytical products.

Initially, the coordinator was manually trawling the systems and taking referrals from staff who had noticed repeat callers. Now the automatic system is in place, most of the identification comes from the technical tags via the Command-and-control system, daily and weekly reports From Force analysts and from products such as BusinessObjects.

Data

Providing quantifiable data to show success remains a challenge.

Kent have used data tools to track and analyse some approximate tangible savings.

Partner agencies

Making links with other agencies was mainly problem free, with those other agencies welcoming the ability to work together to manage this demand.

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Tags

Vulnerable people   Force control rooms