

Citizens Portal and automated messaging

Enabling victims to track updates on crimes they have reported via an online system.

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Key details

Does it work?	Promising
Focus	Organisational
Topic	Criminal justice Digital Intelligence and investigation Vulnerability and safeguarding
Organisation	Thames Valley Police Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary
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Region	South East
Partners	Police
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.
Start date	August 2023
Scale of initiative	Regional

Key details

Target group	General public Victims
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Aim

- To improve the service on 101 calls.
- The force identified that 20% of their 101 demand was related to members of the public asking for information on the crime they had reported. The aim of the portal was to address this demand through self-service and automated messaging.

Intended outcome

- Reduced demand in 101 calls.
- Improved service to 101 calls.
- Improved victim satisfaction.

Description

The Citizens Portal and automatic messaging service provides updates at key points in the victim's journey. It also enables victims to self-serve when requesting updates on crimes they have reported to the police force. It does this through two-way online messaging between the victim and their officer in charge (OIC) contact.

After reporting a crime, the victim will be sent a message with information to allow them to sign in to the Citizens Portal. This requires an authentication process. Once in the portal, they can access general advice and information on victim support, the [victims code](#), crime prevention advice and local information. In addition, they are provided with information specific to their reported crime.

The portal is linked to the force crime system so that when the crime system is updated, the victim will receive a message via text, email or both depending on which contact details they provided. This message will inform them that there is an update on the portal for them to check.

The officer in charge will directly update the crime system which automatically updates the portal and sends a message to the victim.

The portal can send up to 120 different automatically generated messages which include such messages as:

- confirmation that reports have been received
- updates that an officer has been deployed
- when the crime has been allocated for investigation
- details of appointments that have been made
- information to the victim that their case has been closed and the reason why

The two-way messaging system also means the victim can ask a question or send a message directly to the officer in charge via the portal. This message will automatically stamp the same message into the crime system which will generate a task for the officer who will respond writing directly into the crime system.

The technology used is Salesforce Core and Marketing Cloud and Knowledge Base and Mulesoft. This integrates with existing systems. Thames Valley use NICHE and Microsoft Dynamics, but different systems will need different integration with the salesforce technology.

To implement the Citizens Portal, the forces had a full-time project manager and four business subject matter experts across the two forces. These included:

- a subject matter expert from contact management in Thames Valley Police and Hampshire Constabulary
- a local policing subject matter expert from Thames Valley Police
- a Thames Valley Police Staff Operations Manager who led the team
- a full time Information and communication technology (ICT) developer
- a test team of three people during the testing periods

The portal was implemented in three phases, and each had a testing period:

- **Phase 1** – implementation of the portal and automated messaging for graded crime progress. Graded crime progress refers to the various stages a crime goes through in the policing system. Implementation took 15 weeks and the testing period was four weeks.

- **Phase 2** – the addition of enhanced journey messaging which was included in the initial 15 weeks development. Enhanced journey messaging is used to engage users by displaying personalised relevant messages and improves user experience. This required a further testing period of four weeks.
- **Phase 3** – The introduction of two-way messaging. This required a testing period of five weeks.

Overall impact

Overall, in the third quarter of 2023 compared to the third quarter of 2022, both forces saw a decrease in total demand received, which is due largely to a reduction in 101 calls (down 21% for Hampshire and down 14% in Thames Valley).

This reduction in demand has enabled some improvements in other aspects of call management such as a lower abandonment rate for 999 calls seen by both forces. Abandonment rate refers to the number of calls where the caller has hung up while on hold. In 2022–23, the total abandonment rate for Hampshire Constabulary was 2.49% and in Thames Valley Police it was 0.51%. This has decreased in 2023–24, with Hampshire's abandonment rate going down to 0.21%, and Thames Valley's to 0.26%.

The data indicates that the initiative successfully reached its outcomes, by reducing the total demand of 101 calls and decreasing abandonment rates.

Learning

There are three main aspects of learning:

Data quality – data quality is really important, and Thames Valley Police did not realise just how poor the data quality was until they embarked on the project. For example, one in ten names in the crime system were found to be incorrect, and if phone numbers are inputted into the wrong place the victim will not receive the message, likewise if the phone number is incorrect. This increases the risk of data breaches.

To mitigate these problems the force undertook training of frontline officers and control room staff on the importance of data quality and has introduced a range of additional checks in the system. It is important to identify and address these problems before the digital Citizen Portal is implemented.

Keep it simple – The salesforce technology allows you to provide message and tracking information throughout the victim's journey but just because it is possible to do something it is not necessarily helpful to do so. It is important to clearly identify the point in the victim's journey at which it would be helpful to provide updates. It would be easy to overwhelm the victim with messages and create confusion and more questions. Identify in advance with policing subject matter experts the key points in the journey where updates would be beneficial.

Take it step by step – Implementing the technology in a phased way was useful. This allowed the simpler elements to be embedded before moving onto the more complex aspects such as the two-way messaging.

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Tags

Criminal justice Vulnerable people Digital intelligence and investigation Force control rooms