Public focused contact management

Delivering public focused control room services, managing risk, and prioritising vulnerable people.

6 mins read

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The **National Contact Management Strategic Plan 2023-2028 (PDF, 1.8KB)** outlines the importance of delivering services that are public-focused:

> *We will be public focused in the way we deliver our services, focusing on reducing the citizen effort required to achieve the outcome needed for each contact. This includes resolving as much appropriate contact at the first point as is possible.*
>
> *National Contact Management Strategic Plan, 2023-2028*

This information supports you as a contact centre leader by:

- highlighting positive practices in this area, from a range of force control rooms
- signposting you to relevant guidance, standards, and resources

Building trust and confidence

Delivering services that are public focused plays an important role in building public trust and confidence in the police.

Norfolk Constabulary share their experiences of the impact that effective contact management can have in this area:

Video Transcript

Adam Flack, Contact and Control Room (CCR) Tutor, Norfolk Constabulary: Every day, it's different. You never know what's coming in on that phone call. If you're taking calls that day, you know, it could be that you're just giving a bit of advice, a bit of support to someone. It could be that you've got someone in a real-world crisis.

You're their first point of contact, they've called you out of desperation, out of need, and your actions as a call handler really do guide what happens next. You've got to be able to listen, for

starters. You've got to hear what someone's saying. You've got to be compassionate with them as well.

You know, people often phone when they're scared and having a calm persona, being able to reassure them that help's on the way or, you know, that we are dealing with whatever the reason is that they're calling us for. Sometimes you need to be able to take control because people in crisis, in panic, they're reaching out for someone to help them.

Often, they need someone to take control and you can do that sometimes, whilst bearing in mind that, you know, people don't call us because they're having a good day. People call us generally because things are going wrong or they need help, and it's nice to be a part of that system of actually getting someone the help that they need.

Superintendent Jason Broome, Head of CCR, Norfolk Constabulary: The control room is the single point of contact for the vast majority of the public needing policing service. But we also know that many people contact police and don't require a deployment.

And therefore their only experience with policing, perhaps in the last ten years, is that one interaction, and it starts in the CCR. It starts with our empathy, our understanding, our professionalism, our kindness and our ability to get it right every time, which is increasingly difficult because of the complexity and the volume and the challenges that we face.

And flowing from that one interaction, you know that people are kept safe if we're deploying. If the risk assessment is done right, if you deploy the right expertise and get there on time, then the bit that follows that is, nine times out of ten, really, really good as well.

And that's the journey we're taking the victim, the member of the public, on is how to get the best outcome for them.

Adam Flack, CCR Tutor, Norfolk Constabulary: If we're inefficient here then how can the officers on the ground be efficient? Because we're fielding the calls that are coming in, we're processing the information that's coming in, we're collating information that's coming in.

So we really have that overarching control of what's happening out within Norfolk, within the boundaries. You know, the officers need to know what they're going to, why they're going to it and they need to know that we're doing it in a logical way, and in a safe way for them and for the

members of the public.

PC Matt Vass, Patrol Police Constable, Norfolk Constabulary: If the caller has had a good interaction with the control room, it definitely makes a difference for when we respond. Generally, we'll come to a much more pleasant individual who's more engaging and willing to work with us. And speaking with them honestly about what they can expect from the police is important, about trying to regain trust in the police.

But I'd like to think that the control room do their best to try and understand that caller's needs and respond to it appropriately. But it definitely does make a vast difference to us.

Martin Potter, CCR Supervisor, Norfolk Constabulary: It's about managing the caller's expectations to understand that if there is a crime in progress or there's a life at risk, that we will get there and deal with it. And that actually that if something has been THRIVEd [threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability, engagement] and there is less risk to it, that we can give them a timescale and say, 'We'll be there within 24 hours.' And as long as they understand that and they are comfortable with that, it will give them the confidence that we'll arrive when we say we will.

Rosie Ryan, CCR Switchboard Agent, Norfolk Constabulary: You never know what you're going to get. Every day is completely different. There's always situations that come up that you've never heard of before. And it's interesting to learn from them and know what you can do further if you do get another call like that.

The most exciting thing is talking to different members of the public and I'm quite keen in wanting to help and advise them further in the best way that I can.

Listening and responding to public feedback (practice example)

To support continuous improvement, Hertfordshire Constabulary have set up **Echo**, a platform that allows callers, victims, residents, and employees, to tell the police what matters most.

The outcomes of this initiative have included:

- the development of additional services to meet victims' needs
- hundreds of call handlers receiving feedback from callers
- the development of a 'YouSaidWeDid' campaign to keep residents informed of planned actions

Improving call response and reducing abandonment rates

Improving call response and reducing abandonment rates have been identified as areas for improvement by **His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS)**:

> *Many forces don't understand how many calls for service are abandoned and why. Some forces think that some abandoned calls are due to callers being diverted to other contact methods, such as Single Online Home, or because they heard about support information while waiting for their call to be answered. However, no force was able to provide evidence for this assumption. This means they can't assure themselves that opportunities to report crime and prevent harm haven't been missed.*
>
> *Police performance: Getting a grip, HMICFRS, July 2023*

Providing a call back option (practice example)

Humberside Police have been able to reduce the numbers of abandoned calls over a 12-month period by implementing a **call back system that allows 101 callers to hang up the phone and keep their place in the queue**. This resulted in:

- 12.5% of non-emergency 101 callers requesting a call back
- 96.5% of those call backs being successful

Identifying and understanding risk at initial contact

At the first point of police contact, the public maybe in a state of distress, high emotional arousal, possibly injured, frightened or confused.

They're dependent on the skill, knowledge, experience and judgement of operators to confront risks and to make risk decisions. This interaction often involves assessing limited information in time critical and highly uncertain situations.

Risk management must be equally effective whichever route the contact is through (for example, voice call, email or text). Risk management is an integral part of contact management.

Guidelines on recognising and responding to risk

We've produced guidelines on **recognising and responding to vulnerability-related risks**. These are aimed at first responders (including call handlers) and can support your teams to:

- spot the clues associated with vulnerability-related risk
- create an environment that encourages individuals to disclose relevant information
- be curious and obtain a rich picture of circumstances associated with an incident

Principles related to taking and reviewing risk

To better equip and support people in exercising their professional judgement, we've produced authorised professional practice which outlines **ten principles related to taking and reviewing risk**.

> *In too many cases vulnerability and repeat victims weren't identified. Good-quality risk assessments that support the most appropriate response weren't completed or recorded for others to see.*
>
> *Police performance: Getting a Grip, HMICFRS, July 2023*

THRIVE assessments (practice example)

Learn more about the steps South Wales Police are taking to help **improve call-management** and application of **THRIVE** (threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability and engagement) assessment.

Responding to domestic abuse incidents

The first priority of the police in responding to a domestic abuse incident is to protect the victims and others at risk. Our authorised professional practice (APP) on **responding to domestic abuse incidents** includes information on how call-handlers can provide a high-quality response to victims in relation to:

- ensuring safety
- information gathering
- preserving evidence
- deployment of response

Rapid video response for domestic abuse victims (practice example)

Kent Police have implemented a **rapid video response system for domestic abuse victims** who call 999. The aim of the intervention is to improve outcomes for victims by improving police response to non-emergency reports of domestic abuse at the point of call.

Partnership working

The police may not always be the most appropriate service to respond to some 999 or 101 calls. Working with partner organisations can sometimes be the most successful way of ensuring people get access to the support they need.

Concerns for health and welfare

We've produced the **Right Care, Right Person (RCRP) toolkit**, which aims to ensure vulnerable people get the right support from the right emergency services. RCRP applies to calls for service about:

- concern for the welfare of a person
- people who have walked out of a healthcare setting
- people who are absent without leave from mental health services
- medical incidents

Force control room implementation guidance

Our toolkit includes **force control room implementation guidance**. This covers topics such as how you can support call handlers by:

- helping them to identify what the police are being asked to do

- helping them to understand local RCRP agreements, so they can effectively signpost to other services when it's more appropriate for another agency to respond
- recognising they may need more time to handle calls related to RCRP
- developing decision-making toolkits or flowcharts
- providing them with access to immediate support and advice when taking RCRP related calls

RCRP e-Learning

Control room teams also have access to our **RCRP e-learning**, via College Learn (you will need to register and log in).

This covers:

- the general principles of RCRP
- scenarios for staff to work through to gain understanding of the legal basis for the RCRP approach

This e-learning must be supplemented by additional training and support for anyone involved in RCRP within your force control room:

> *Sustainable solutions require a collaborative approach. This has been particularly evident in the interface between Policing and Health and Social Care. The emerging work on 'Right Care – Right Person' is an important development. If it is to be successful and sustainable clear parameters will need to be set and maintained, detailed training and guidance given to Contact Management staff and most important good support given to staff making key, fast time decisions, some of which will doubtless come under significant scrutiny.*

> *National Contact Management Strategic Plan (2023-2028)*

Implementing RCRP (practice example)

Learn more about how **RCRP has been implemented in Humberside police**.

Partnership working guidance

Aligning priorities with partners can improve cooperation and reduce potential duplication of activity. Working with partners may also provide access to alternative solutions and enable non-crime issues to be passed on to the most suitable agency.

We've published guidance on how **partnership working can facilitate problem solving**. This may include aligning priorities, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and agreeing data-sharing protocols to protect vulnerable people.

Back to **Improving force control room services**

Tags

Operational policing   Force control rooms