



## Briefing Paper for the attention of Inverclyde Scrutiny Board

### 101 Call Waiting Times

#### 1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this briefing paper is to provide Inverclyde Scrutiny Board with an oversight, in relation to 101 Call waiting times.
- 1.2 There has been considerable media interest as well as numerous requests from elected members in relation to this matter.
- 1.3 This briefing paper will therefore outline some of the reasons for an extended wait time and will also explain measures that have had to be taken, to ensure staff remain as safe as possible throughout the ongoing Pandemic whilst providing a comprehensive service to the communities of Scotland and policing colleagues.

#### 2. Outline

- 2.1 To provide some context around our call handling times, Police Scotland receives around 3.4 million contacts annually and this volume brings with it the necessity to prioritise the answering of certain types of calls over the non-emergency 101 calls. The highest priority is given to 999 calls from the public seeking emergency assistance, this is followed by calls received from partner emergency services (e.g. other Police Forces, Fire, and Ambulance) and Alarm activations.
- 2.2 Police Scotland Service Centre is one of the few Call Centre environments where staff have attended on a daily basis to deliver a service to the communities of Scotland and police colleagues.
- 2.3 During peak demand periods, some callers who dial the 101 non-emergency number, have had to wait longer than normal to have the call answered. There are various contributory factors and the following will outline some of the reasons. Cognisance should also however be taken, that alternative methods of reporting non-emergency matters have been publicised regularly and that when 101 is called there is an automated message to hang up and dial 999 if the call is an emergency. Between 60 and 120 Seconds an automated message also highlights other reporting facilities available, for example, the online reporting facility known as 'Contactus'.
- 2.4 Due to the ongoing Pandemic, there has been a Health and Safety requirement to gain additional information in relation to COVID-19 risks. As you know, if officers are required to attend at a premises, it is essential that the call handler establishes if there are any persons at that location who are Covid positive, Shielding, Self-isolating, under quarantine restrictions or suffering from any symptoms, to allow the attending officers to wear the appropriate PPE. The obvious implication of this is a longer duration of call, which has an impact on the wait time for other callers.
- 2.5 The introduction of the Contact Assessment Model (CAM), has increased the duration of calls, due to a more in-depth initial information gathering exercise

(THRIVE), to ensure the call is resolved in the most appropriate way. This has had a noted positive impact on Local Policing, in that many enquiries are now resolved at first point of contact by the Resolution Team at C3 Division. Typically between 65% and 70% of all contacts received are resolved within C3 Division.

2.6 Over and above the rise in call duration, there are other elements that have had a direct impact on non-emergency call times, the following is not an exhaustive list:

- COVID19 related absence within C3 Division including the Service Centre.
- Reduced capacity for personnel due to physical distancing.
- Reduced capability to host recruitment days and restrictions on the number of candidates attending selection centres.
- An increase in call volume which previously would have been resolved by partner agencies. COVID19 restrictions and working from home policies have reduced partner agency capacity throughout the pandemic.
- Increase in call volume on COVID19 related restrictions by the Government, which has caused varied and unpredictable call demand.
- Significant increase in call demand due to each stage in easing of COVID19 restrictions.
- Significant increase in calls associated with summer demand period. This year the country has seen a significant rise in 'staycation' holidays due to the inability of the Scottish public to travel abroad. This increase in tourism has brought about an increase in policing issues particularly within rural and popular holiday and beauty spots.
- A significant number of people that use 101 are looking for information. Add frequently asked questions of the website.

2.7 It is worth noting that when members of the public were surveyed about their experience of contacting and interacting with Police Scotland. A high level of user satisfaction in Police Scotland was maintained during July 2021 and measures of confidence in C3 Division remain high, as follows:

- 68% of respondents felt Police Scotland were easy to contact
- 81% were satisfied with their treatment during initial contact
- 86% felt staff understood what they needed
- 62% felt that they were provided with the appropriate response

### **3. Conclusion**

3.1 C3 Division has continued throughout the Pandemic to seek innovative ways to address the 101 system issues, from both a short and long term aspect and will continue to do so. Despite the risks, staff have continued to report for duty at one of the few Service Centres still functioning at as normal a service as possible, including answering calls of a non-emergency type, which is not replicated elsewhere in many other areas.

3.2 The rise in demand and associated challenges has not been unique to Police Scotland, with all other emergency services across the UK experiencing similar

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issues. Throughout the pandemic we have continued to prioritise emergency 999 call handling creating an average speed of answer of under 10 seconds throughout.

David Duncan  
Chief Superintendent

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