

## POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME PANEL REPORT

Meeting Date	6 February 2023
Report Title	Force Control Room

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### Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to provide information to the Police, Fire and Crime Panel to enable it to determine if the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) is sufficiently holding the Chief Constable to account for the delivery of an effective police service, specifically in relation to the performance of the Force Control Room (FCR) and take up of Single Online Home.

This report will:

- Provide information in relation to the current performance of the FCR.
- Provide an update on the PFCC scrutiny activity.
- Provide the panel with an update about the Force's improvement programme for the FCR.
- Update panel members about the PFCC's financial investment into the FCR.

### Summary of key content

North Yorkshire Police is funded by the government and directly by the public through their council tax contributions, to deliver a policing service.

When a person has or is experiencing a crime, has key information that could support the police, or when there is a danger to life or someone is in immediate danger, that person needs to be able to reach the police quickly.

The Chief Constable is responsible for the performance of North Yorkshire Police, which includes the Force Control Room. The person who holds the Chief Constable account for this, is the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC).

### Background

The experience of the public when they contact the police is a key priority for the PFCC. North Yorkshire Police's response times to 101 and 999 calls has been well publicised, and the Commissioner feels they are unacceptable.

It is important to recognise the context within which police performance is currently being assessed. Nationally there has been a 16% increase in 999 calls to the police, and 2022 saw the highest number of emergency calls to North Yorkshire Police ever in one month (over 10,000 in July and August).

The national target is that 90% of 999 calls should be answered in under 10 seconds. Between November 2021 and November 2022, the force only achieved 44% answered within this time. For transparency, any member of the public wishing to view police 999 performance data can do so at <https://www.police.uk/pu/your-area/north-yorkshire-police/performance/999-performance-data/?tc=hambleton>

The PFCC and North Yorkshire Police recognise that 101 call wait times need to be improved and this was clearly articulated by the PFCC to the Force at the November 2022 Public Accountability Meeting. Between February and December 2022, the average 101 call answer time ranged from 4 minutes and 3 seconds to 10 minutes and 17 seconds. Unlike for 999 calls, nationally there is no imposed target for answering 101 calls. Instead, this is for the PFCC to determine locally. Since the early part of last year, the PFCC has worked to work with the Chief Constable of North Yorkshire Police to improve 101 and 999 performance.

Whilst it is broadly accepted that within 101 calls, there will be individuals who need the police more urgently, the PFCC wants the force to explore how they could deliver a long-term programme of public education and awareness about when to contact the police, and the most appropriate method for doing so depending on the circumstances.

The public have communicated their concerns about this issue with the PFCC. Between 1 January 2022 and 31 December 2022, the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC) received;

- 27 complaints relating to call handling and the outcome of a call
- 5 complaints relating to the behaviour of officers
- 22 relating to call wait times
- 1 relating to the service provided by the Single Online Home feature (the force's website).

In addition to these, 19 cases have been referred to the PFCC's Senior Caseworker. These cases specifically relate to call wait times and the resourcing of the Force Control Room (FCR). The Senior Caseworker works closely with the Commissioner to manage correspondence and enquiries. Liaising with Services and other agencies to resolve matters acting as a point of referral or escalation for more complex, serious or sensitive cases to effect service recovery,

However, there have been five pieces of appreciative correspondence received by the OPFCC, to recognise the good work of the FCR for example *"I rang 999 for help, the officer to whom I spoke was most helpful, a credit to the force"*.

## PFCC Scrutiny and Accountability Activity

The PFCC now ensures that Staff and senior managers within the OPFCC routinely attend North Yorkshire Police's 'Gold' and 'Silver' meetings. These meetings form a hierarchical structure, enabling regular focused attention to be given to responding to an important or critical issue. The PFCC does not have an operational policing remit (the OPFCC is a separate organisation to the police) so representatives from the OPFCC attend as guests. In doing so they ask questions and pose respectful challenge during the meetings, and cascade information back to the PFCC, supporting the PFCC to then hold the Chief Constable to account at their weekly meetings.

In addition to regular meetings with the Chief Constable the PFCC has also considered the issue of customer contact twice during 2022 utilising the Public Accountability Meetings (PAMs) to do so. These are live streamed to the public and other stakeholders.

At the PAM in November 2022 call wait times were discussed and officers were scrutinised and challenged by the PFCC. In addition, members of the public and other stakeholders were invited to submit questions to the Force via the PFCC. The PFCC received no public questions.

The PFCC has monitored and brought challenge about call wait times and the FCR as a specific issue at their Executive Board (a decision-making group), which is attended by a range of senior personnel including the OPFCC Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer; the Assistant Commissioner and Director of Partnerships and Commissioning; the Chief Finance Officer; the Chief Constable; and the Deputy Chief Constable.

The PFCC receives monthly performance data about the FCR. More recently an advanced performance dashboard has been created, specifically for the PFCC, by the Business Insight Lead for enableNY to ensure the PFCC can monitor performance more effectively to assist with scrutiny and accountability.

## The Force's Improvement Programme

North Yorkshire Police generally deal with over 10,000 emergency (999) calls a month. In addition to this, in October alone, 2022 the Force received over 18,000 non-emergency (101) calls. The Force also receives around 10,000 'hold for the operator' calls each month which are taken by police station front counter staff.

Adding to incoming calls, the FCR make approximately 12,000 – 13,000 outgoing calls each month. These include calls to other services during live incidents (such as the ambulance and fire and rescue services). Other outgoing calls also include attempts to 'call back' individuals when the Force has received 999 calls which have then been hung up. During a 6-month period, the Force dealt with 10,000 'pocket calls' where members of the public had accidentally called the police on emergency 999.

Included within the demand to the FCR, the Force also receives around 100 requests for service each week through its website forms (referred to as Single Online Home).

There are several factors which impact North Yorkshire Police's ability to respond effectively to calls for its service. For example, old technology and existing processes and the primary reason for 101 and 999 delays is that assessments which the force have carried out identify that the FCR does not have enough staff to manage demand. Police forces that are performing at a higher standard for call wait times often have much larger teams of people within their FCRs.

Usually when a member of the public telephones 101 and is required to wait, it will be because a call handler/communications officer is on another line responding to a person who has dialled 999. Whilst the public should be able to reach the police in a reasonable time in a non-emergency situation, it is also important to recognise the totality of a situation. That is, during what may be a non-emergency moment for that person, FCR staff may be dealing with a threat to life, crime in progress, or immediate harm related call.

To respond to this the Force has analysed a broad range of data and has developed an improvement plan. This programme aims to stabilise the FCR at its current demand levels over the next 12-18 months. However, this programme is not designed to develop the service to meet new demand.

The programme includes additional investment by the PFCC (annex A), to enable the recruitment of an additional 36 communications officers, 12 additional dispatchers, 6 new trainers and 2 additional police inspectors. The PFCC is committed to improving outcomes for the public when they contact the FCR.

Other activity within the programme includes:

- Regular detailed demand analysis which enables the Force to greater understand what the public need and when.
- Review of shifts.
- Process review and analysis of current practices.
- Increase staffing and upskilling of staff.
- Address attrition and improving staff retention.
- Explore new digital solutions.
- Daily management of wait time performance.
- Introduction of staff as 'floor walkers' who can provide immediate help and support to staff when needed.
- Work with other organisations to ensure the public get to the right service that they need
- Review improvement areas already implemented. For example, a review of the Initial Enquiry Team.

The PFCC asked that the force reported directly other improvements that could be made to drive a positive performance improvement culture. The force has responded by doing the following;

- The introduction of a new management team
- Daily 15-minute meetings which look at demand projections and resourcing for the shift ahead.
- New performance meetings for all teams (these feed into the Force's general quarterly performance meetings)

The FCR is a frontline service which employs highly trained staff who work in what is a challenging and high-pressured environment, dealing with individuals in our communities when they are most in need, and often at their most vulnerable. The PFCC recognises that those staff share the public's frustration when response time are not what they should be due to the sheer volume of calls that they are dealing with.

During the improvement programme the Force is also closely monitoring its customer service and victims needs assessments, to ensure that the high standard of care and service that the public receive when they do reach the police, is maintained.

The PFCC will use the following to assess the programme of improvement and hold the Chief constable to account for delivery;

- Detailed performance data which show not only average call wait times, but how quickly calls are answered in the Force's most busy periods.
- Updates about formal staff engagement activities, the results, and tangible evidence of how staff views are influencing change.
- Details on staff pay increase proposal/options.
- Exit interview data.

As part of the programme the Initial Investigation Team will also be reviewed and assessed. This was introduced in June 2022 and is performing well. The team take 30-50% of non-emergency incidents and place them into an appointment system, which means that within 3 days a member of the public will have received contact from the police (for non-emergency cases only). The team has reduced demand on the

front line, releasing officers to get to higher grade incidents quickly. There is a customer satisfaction survey for people who receive this service and 94% report as being 'very pleased' with their experience.

The PFCC actively encouraged the force to introduce "Right Care, Right Person" which they will do so on 31 January 2023. which is a new initiative replicated from Humberside Police, which works to ensure that the public can reach the right person and receive the right care that they really need. For example, the police currently receive calls for service from hospitals is a patient refuses to leave the premises. That call for service is not appropriate when there is no threat of harm, or no breach of the peace. The Force has completed a piece of work which evidences thousands of calls for a service from the police, when the police are not the most appropriate service. Further information about Right Care Right Person can be found on the Force's website at <https://www.northyorkshire.police.uk/news/northyorkshire/news/news/2023/01-january/right-care-right-person-to-be-rolled-out-from-31-january-2023/>.

## Offer to Panel Members

To support panel members in their scrutiny of the PFCC, the Chief Constable has extended an invitation to each panel member to visit the FCR. Arrangements for this can be made via the PFCC's Executive Support Team.

## Annex A

### PFCC Investment

In addition to the scrutiny and accountability role of the PFCC, the PFCC has decided to provide the FCR with a £1.8 million per year financial investment to improve outcomes for the public.

This investment will enable the Chief Constable to:

- Fund 36 additional communications officers, 12 additional dispatchers, 6 established trainers and 2 additional police inspectors.
- Streamline the after-call administration activities by reviewing call handling processes to ensure that staff spend as little time as possible on after-call work, freeing them up for the next incoming call
- Allow for detailed work to understand and deliver process efficiencies by reviewing all processes within the customer contact function to ensure that they remain fit for purpose.
- Provide new ICT technologies with Implementation of additional tools to help manage the workforce, ensuring that resource meets demand as well as introducing an element of automation when processing an incident, freeing up the communications officers to enable them to take further calls.
- Explore and develop alternative ways to advance people and technology to meet the needs of the public offering a variety of channels.