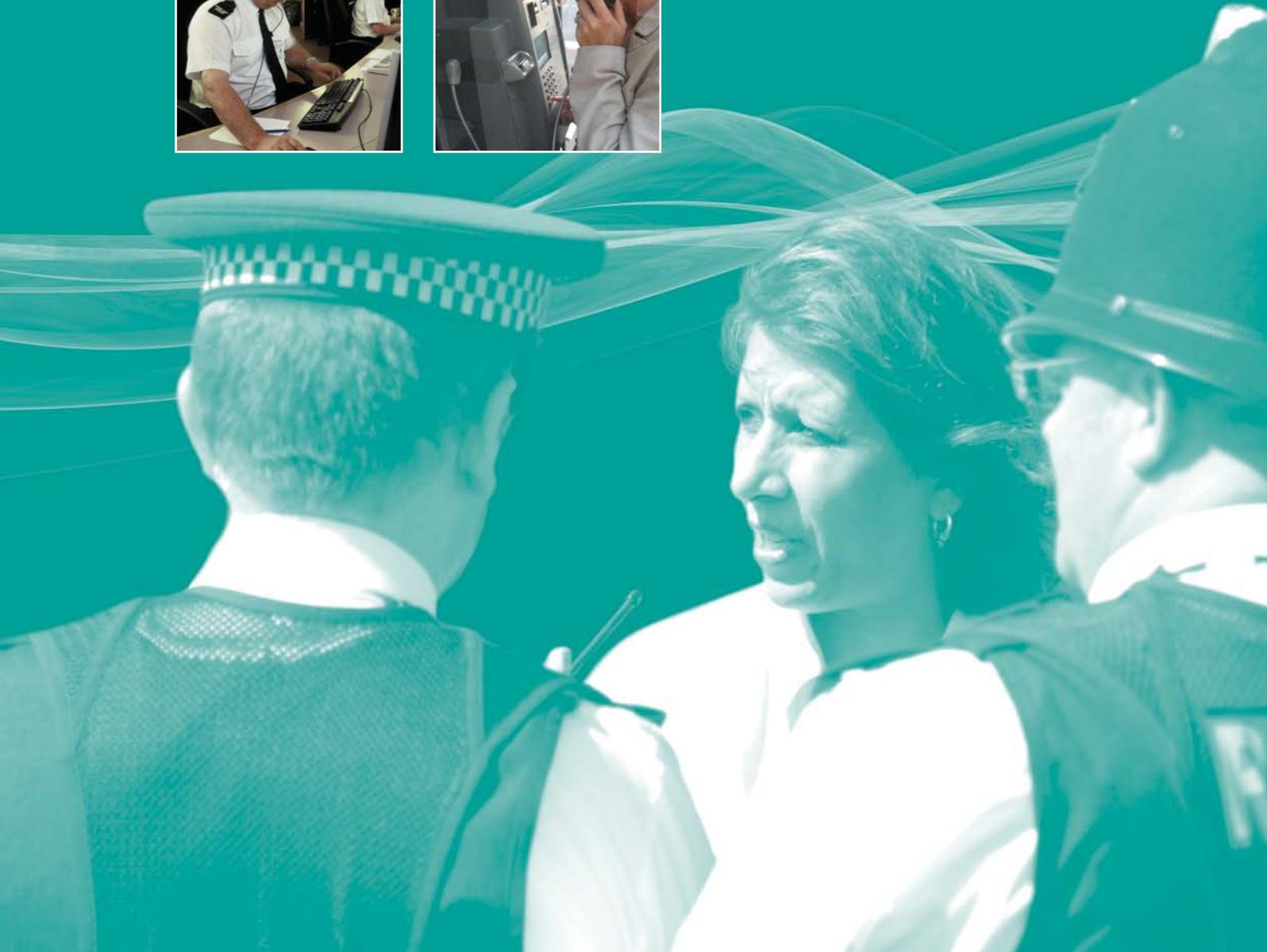
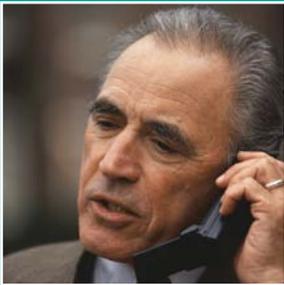




# First Contact

A Thematic Inspection of  
Police Contact Management





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## Preface

The UK police service currently receives over 67 million calls for assistance from the public annually. While the majority of these calls represent first-time contact with the police, individual callers increasingly have significant experience of dealing with contact centres, and the quality of the police interaction is then measured against these commercial benchmarks. Police forces have just one chance to make a good first impression, but too often they fail to achieve the required standards.

In *Open all hours*, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary's (HMIC's) thematic inspection of public reassurance (2001), we emphasised the importance of contact management and challenged forces to deliver a service where "callers will be answered promptly by a trained and knowledgeable operator who, with the appropriate information technology (IT) support, will be able to resolve their call at the first point of contact". Three years later, HMIC's first Baseline Assessment (for the year 2003/04) identified call management as the second worst performing function across a wide range of policing activities in England and Wales – the *Open all hours* vision seems far from being achieved.

This inspection benchmarks current police performance against wider industry standards. While forces have invested both money and effort in technology, staffing and structural changes, most provision currently falls short of the standards the public demands and deserves. In particular, forces must embrace the concept of customer focus and tailor the access offered and the services provided to users' actual needs and expectations.

Contact management must also be promoted within policing priorities to be recognised as one of the most important police activities, alongside crime reduction and investigation. Chief officers and senior managers need to value its vital contribution to delivering core operational services and building public confidence in the police – the service must aspire to, and achieve, high standards of contact management. This report identifies such standards in key areas which, if accepted and addressed energetically, will greatly improve the all-important 'first contact' between the public and the police. While we recognise that forces have a substantial change agenda to absorb, this issue is too important to ignore – it underpins every aspect of modern policing.

HMIC in Scotland collaborated fully in this inspection, providing a full-time member of the inspection team. This increased the scope of research and, while recommendations and suggestions are aimed at forces in England and Wales, the report will be a very useful reference point for Scottish forces and for HMIC in Scotland in pursuing its inspection programme.

My personal thanks are extended to all of the inspection team, police forces, commercial companies and many individuals who helped to identify current good practice and those areas requiring development. I am particularly grateful for the critical contribution of the Inspection Reference Group, whose experience and knowledge were invaluable to the inspection team.

Sir Ronnie Flanagan GBE MA  
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary

## Executive summary

1. There is no area of policing service where direct comparison with the commercial sector is more valid – but unfortunately more damning – than the handling of calls from the public. The exponential growth of call centres as the first point of contact between organisations and their customers has incrementally raised callers' expectations and set a high benchmark for quality, speed of response and professionalism that the police service is struggling to match.
2. Since highlighting the importance of contact management in the 2001 thematic inspection of reassurance (*Open all hours*), HMIC has established 'call management' as one of the core frameworks within the Baseline Assessment of policing performance. Disappointingly, in the 2003/04 assessment not one force rated an *Excellent* grading, and 27 of the 43 forces were graded *Fair* or *Poor*. This finding was a catalyst to action, one response being this thematic inspection.
3. Not only has the Government not accepted the current inadequate levels of overall service, it has raised the bar. During 2004/05 the Home Office, with the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), introduced the Quality of Service Commitment, setting standards for: ease of contacting police; the quality of service offered; the initial handling of enquiries; and provision of information and feedback. In addition, a tripartite working group has produced the National Call Handling Standards (NCHS), which provide specific direction on contact management. Chief constables have promised full compliance with both sets of standards during 2006 – a challenging timescale.
4. The need for more urgent progress is highlighted by the 2004/05 Baseline Assessment. While 13 forces have improved their grading – including three that achieved *Excellent* – six others slipped at least one grade, with the result that the overall picture shows exactly the same numbers of *Good* and *Fair* as one year earlier. This represents very modest progress and is clearly not the step change needed if every force is to meet the standards set out in the Quality of Service Commitment and the NCHS. Such a step change will require a significant effort and a far greater focus on the effectiveness of contact management during 2005/06.
5. This inspection has examined good practice in commercial contact centres and drawn comparisons with police contact management performance. In a few areas – notably some staffing issues – the police service outperforms its private sector counterparts, but generally there is a great deal to learn from commercial approaches. How can police forces move quickly up the learning curve to reach these standards of service? Helpfully, a significant body of research and good practice has defined eight key business drivers that combine to deliver excellent contact centre performance. The report addresses each of these drivers in turn (Chapters 2–9), highlighting good practice from both the private sector and within policing, and it pulls together an enhanced framework of standards that, if adopted and applied nationally, will help the service to make the required change in performance and meet the 2006 deadline.

## KEY BUSINESS DRIVERS

### Customer focus

6. Successful businesses devote substantial effort to finding out who their existing and potential customers are and then asking them directly what they need or expect of the service offered. Not one UK force has a comprehensive approach to this 'customer segmentation'. While most forces use one or more public survey methods, they are rarely dedicated to contact management issues. Their timing, format and coverage invariably make it difficult to distinguish comments about initial contact from those relating to more general engagement with the police.
7. Without such specific and focused feedback from customers, opportunities to tailor and improve the service are routinely missed. In addition, the absence of such information at a local level impedes the creation of a comprehensive picture from which national good practice and standards could be formulated for the benefit of the service as a whole.
8. In an increasingly multi-channel world of communications, the service needs to open as many different channels as possible to provide the appropriate breadth of access. Most forces have recognised this need, and the use of internet, email and texting is progressing particularly well.
9. An important development in further expansion of access is the single non-emergency number (SNEN) project. This has real potential both to provide a wider public service – with easy access to police and local authorities – and to free up police contact centre staff and allow them to deal more effectively with higher-priority calls for assistance. Success is not a foregone conclusion, however, and it is vital that the lessons from mainstream contact management and earlier localised non-emergency call handling inform the SNEN project.

### Business culture

10. To achieve a step change in call handling quality the service as a whole, and chief officers in particular, must recognise the importance of contact management and make it a core operational priority. For example, contact centre representatives should feature at all levels within National Intelligence Model (NIM) structures, actively contributing to strategic and tactical assessments and targeting their own service delivery accordingly.
11. In addition, there should be a far greater involvement of contact management staff – through internal surveys and consultation – in shaping the service they provide, so that their frontline experience helps to improve operational policing more generally. This could also assist in reducing the inter-departmental friction that too often characterises the relationship between contact centres and operational response staff, who do not always understand or value each other's contribution.
12. The prevailing view that contact management is undervalued is reinforced by the absence of a high-profile national professional forum to consider policy and practice. HMIC acknowledges the recent good work of the tripartite group that produced the NCHS but, disappointingly, this group has been disbanded. A strong cultural message would be sent out by ACPO if it were to create a permanent joint national forum, with a regional structure in support. These could energise new approaches to contact management, monitor progress against standards and spread good practice.

### Strategy and structures

13. It is also disappointing that there is no national contact management strategy, nor is there any plan to produce one. This should be an immediate priority for the service, to ensure that the promising NCHS sit within a clear strategic framework and are regularly and routinely updated against national objectives. The previously proposed national forum would be an ideal vehicle for establishing a national strategy and ensuring that it remains a dynamic spur to improvement. Equally surprising is the fact that almost a third of forces do not even have a local call handling or contact management strategy. It is important to the success of national efforts that every force has both a strategy and a chief officer champion to drive implementation, compliance and continuous improvement.
14. Perhaps most worryingly, given the core importance of the function to operational policing, six forces have no business continuity plan, and a similar number have no disaster recovery plan to cope with serious malfunction or loss of communication systems. One in five UK forces has only one of these two plans in place. This is wholly unacceptable. Every force must ensure it has both plans and, as importantly, that they are reviewed and tested in practice at least annually.
15. In terms of structure, forces are increasingly moving away from local control rooms to centralised contact management (or consolidation in a very small number of centres). There are a limited number of options to achieve this. In recent years, some 33 forces have created central or consolidated contact centres, and yet there is no national advice or guidance on the key issues to consider. This inspection has mapped out four of the more popular options for consolidation and drawn up model templates, together with examples of good practice and potential barriers, to assist forces considering reorganisation. Such information needs to be regularly updated by the service.

### People

16. Much of industry lags behind the police service in recognising the importance of staff in delivering a high-quality contact management service. The *Open all hours* thematic report recommended that staff development and career progression plans should be linked to development needs, and 92 per cent of forces now have structured career progression plans. The impact on staff turnover has been positive, and the current average rate of 14 per cent compares very favourably with the private sector norm of 27 per cent. However, there is still some way to go before all forces reflect the best commercial practices. *Open all hours* also recommended the introduction of routine staff surveys and exit interviews to inform service improvements, but to date only 37 per cent of forces have implemented this recommendation.
17. The single most important 'people issue' is the need for the whole policing organisation to recognise the importance of dealing professionally with calls from the public. Although traditionally viewed as something of a backroom 'Cinderella' function, good call management can make a major contribution to effective crime investigation and efficient resource deployment. Many police contact management departments employ more staff than an operational Basic Command Unit (BCU), and yet it is rare for them to have the human resource (HR), finance and training resources and expertise now commonplace in BCUs. At the very least, each contact management department should have dedicated HR expertise and customised policies for recruitment, development and retention.

### Training, skills and education

18. Contact management increasingly requires specific skills and should be seen as a police specialism with nationally recognised training courses for all staff, including senior managers. The availability of accreditation and qualifications such as NVQs is being explored, building on progress already made in a few forces. This should be treated by all forces as a priority.
19. At force level, there should be a formalised mentoring and tutoring process, linked to performance and development reviews. Ideally, staff should have a structured briefing and debriefing at the beginning and end of every shift, both for the benefit of the individual and to aid organisational learning. It is important that training, briefing and tutoring are embedded as core working practices and are not viewed as expendable options, diversions or abstractions. Dedicated training teams offer significant advantages in achieving such objectives.

### Location and facilities

20. In spite of significant recent activity in both premises refurbishment and the building of new dedicated call centres, there is no central repository of good practice advice on project management, processes, design or procurement. The most up-to-date government guidance dates from 1994 and is very basic. There is a need for central consolidation of good practice and a process for reviewing and updating advice. Current responsibility for this lies with the Home Office, but it may well transfer in the future to the National Policing Improvement Agency.
21. The same absence of central advice besets environmental, spatial, furniture and equipment design. Experience has proven the value of involving staff in the design and improvement of the working environment, but the results of such involvement and lessons learned are not collated for wider reference. Without these central reference points, forces considering further new-build or refurbishment projects are likely to incur substantial – but largely avoidable – consultancy costs, and they may repeat the mistakes of previous experience.

### Technology

22. Technology is an important enabler for good contact management but should not drive the business. There is a plethora of technology in the contact centre landscape, but a few core systems are now widely accepted as the main elements of an effective operation. The key applications of IT<sup>1</sup> relate to initial access, workflow processes, providing timely and accurate information to call-takers and assisting decision-making.
23. One specific, and increasingly popular, option is Customer Relationship Management (CRM). This is invariably an expensive option that should only be adopted with great care and forward planning. Both private and public sector organisations have made expensive mistakes in introducing CRM systems that appear attractive but neither match organisational needs nor support their core processes. In one example, a million-pound system was routinely switched off by practitioners to allow them to work more efficiently. Conversely, Enhanced Information Service for Emergency Calls

<sup>1</sup> While commercial products and suppliers are mentioned in the report, HMIC is not seeking to endorse particular suppliers or products.

(EISEC) is an important application that should be used by every force. The value of early, automatic notification of caller details through EISEC has been well proven and yet nearly half of all UK forces have not installed this facility.

24. There is sufficient cumulative knowledge about core technological issues, from industry and within policing, to provide a substantial body of advice to forces. Currently, however, this knowledge is dispersed and not easily available to those requiring it. A central bank of technological good practice advice is needed urgently. In addition, a more explicit and shared approach to identifying and acquiring appropriate technology would provide significant opportunities for financial savings through the increased buying power of interested groups of forces.

### **Performance information**

25. Contact centres are generally awash with technology able to generate a wide range of performance and workload statistics. It is therefore disappointing to note the paucity of valid, comparable performance information, together with a virtual absence of national performance indicators. Nationally, current measures in use (within the Policing Performance Assessment Framework) are limited to the satisfaction of victims of a limited category of crimes – thus representing a tiny minority of callers. Although every force measures 999 and non-emergency call answering times, more relevant measures of service quality, such as the abandoned call rate, are captured by just four forces. This report recommends that a wider basket of relevant performance indicators – both primary and diagnostic measures – are used both locally and nationally.
26. A further concern, given the importance of cost-efficiency, is the limited use of technology to support demand management and workforce management modelling. With the widespread availability of predictive models, some free of charge, there is little excuse for not deploying such technology or applying dedicated resources to data collection and analysis. Currently, fewer than a third of forces have the relevant technology to assist; under a half employ resource planners or analysts within contact management; and only 5 per cent have a demand management strategy.

### **WHAT SHOULD 'GOOD' PERFORMANCE LOOK LIKE?**

27. HMIC commends the production of the NCHS – both the measures proposed and the standards set out are good first steps towards consistent approaches, and they will undoubtedly help to raise the overall quality of service. However, this inspection has identified additional important issues that warrant inclusion in any national standards or measures. The report sets out clearly at the start of each chapter a bullet-point summary of the key factors of good performance within the relevant 'business driver'. These summaries encompass the standards already published within the NCHS, which have been expanded as a result of the inspection findings.
28. In addition, the inspection team has produced a comprehensive 'marking matrix', suitable for use both as a self-assessment tool or as the basis for external inspection. It makes explicit the evidence needed by assessors or inspectors to underpin relevant gradings or scores. This matrix will form the basis for any focused HMIC inspection of contact management and will underpin the future Baseline Assessment process.

### NEXT STEPS

29. Throughout this report HMIC identifies a need for national co-ordination of good practice and advice and urges recognition of the importance of the contact management function. The single most important step required to achieve these two aims is the establishment of a national tripartite forum. This group should: take responsibility for collating and disseminating good practice; provide the leadership and focus required to produce a national strategy; foster implementation of the agreed standards; and monitor performance using agreed national measures. The ongoing work would also benefit a number of other important national initiatives, not least the citizen focus agenda and the SNEN.
30. Chief constables are currently committed to achieving the standards set out in the NCHS and the Quality of Service Commitment, but there is no statutory or mandatory requirement. The experience of voluntary Police National Computer (PNC) standards (2001/03) does not offer a promising precedent – intensive HMIC engagement and, later, a statutory Code of Practice were needed before most forces tackled backlogs and poor standards. The limited improvements in call management as evidenced by the 2004/05 Baseline Assessment raise concerns over voluntary delivery. Before reaching conclusions about the likelihood of achieving these standards, however, it will be necessary to review the progress of the six forces currently piloting NCHS implementation – early results should be available in November 2005.
31. It would be premature to propose any statutory reinforcement of this commitment to achieve national standards before these pilot outcomes are known. HMIC will reserve judgement until the results of Baseline Assessment 2005/06, and recommends that in April 2006 all forces complete a full self-assessment on contact management (as set out in Appendix G) to inform the baseline grading.
32. If the service is to meet the vision set out in *Open all hours* and achieve the standards contained within the NCHS and the Quality of Service Commitment, every force will need to take a quantum leap forward to exceed current performance. The subject is too important for continued under-performance to be countenanced. It is vital that all concerned – and in particular chief constables – translate commitments into tangible action and sustainable improvements in service. The findings of this inspection should make a valuable contribution to this endeavour.

# 1. Calling the police for assistance





# 1. Calling the police for assistance

- 1.1 When a member of the public telephones the police, it is an exercise that is rarely undertaken lightly. Whether reporting a crime or incident, requiring police attendance or simply seeking to pass on information, making direct contact with the police is a major step and can be unnerving for many citizens. Information obtained through such contact is the lifeblood of effective policing and, therefore, it is important for all parties concerned that callers' experiences are consistently positive, encouraging further contact and even better exchange of information.
- 1.2 Increasingly, the majority of public contact is by telephone and through police contact centres. The use of the term 'contact centre' in this report recognises the move towards employing other methods of communication in addition to telephony, such as email and text – consequently, 'contact centre' is gradually replacing 'call centre'. 'Contact centre' is used throughout this report unless an organisation relies on a telephone system, in which case 'call centre' is used.
- 1.3 Police contact management practice cannot be considered in isolation from either the policing landscape or the business context within which such call centres operate. Fundamental police reform has altered the operational landscape and posed major new challenges to all service areas, especially those where there is a direct public interface. Equally relevant, the wider commercial environment of contact management is evolving at a dramatic pace, raising the standards by which police contact management is judged.
- 1.4 This chapter presents a thumbnail sketch of both the policing landscape and the commercial call centre environment, before concentrating on the specific issues facing contact management within policing.

## THE OPERATIONAL POLICING LANDSCAPE

- 1.5 The Police Reform agenda changed the focus and nature of police service delivery. As a subset of wider public sector reform, the Government has sought to apply four underlying principles to policing, namely:
  - establishing a framework of national standards and accountability;
  - devolving power to the local level;
  - providing flexibility and better rewards for frontline staff; and
  - offering greater choice to the customer.
- 1.6 Perhaps most relevant to contact management, the 'customer' focus has been epitomised in two strands of Police Reform work, namely the Quality of Service Commitment and citizen-focused policing. In September 2004, the incumbent Home Secretary, David Blunkett, announced a Quality of Service Commitment (labelled 'the Coppers Contract'), setting out the level of service people should expect when contacting the police for the first time. The Quality of Service Commitment sets standards in five key areas:
  1. making it easy to contact the police;
  2. providing a professional and high-quality service;
  3. dealing with initial enquiries from the public;
  4. keeping people informed; and
  5. providing opportunities for feedback.

- 1.7 Every force is expected to have introduced these standards by the end of 2006 and to have agreed, in a 'contract' with their communities, how the standards can be enhanced still further locally to reflect the particular needs of the relevant communities. A key element will be facilitating easier public contact with the police through improved call handling systems, underpinned by clearer information on how to make contact.
- 1.8 The thrust of citizen-focused policing is to improve the way police forces understand, communicate with and engage with their communities, whether as direct users of services or as members of the wider public. Its ultimate aim is to embed a greater citizen perspective into all aspects of policing in order to increase the public's confidence in and satisfaction with the police service.

### **CONTACT MANAGEMENT BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT**

- 1.9 Traditionally, the public sector – and in particular the police service – has considered that its unique problems and challenges limit comparison with private sector organisations. Although it strives to be business-like, policing is not a business. Police operational response does not contribute to commercial profit but to a spectrum of social and public-safety outcomes. However, while the operational response and the societal importance of outcomes certainly vary widely, it is increasingly accepted that the 'front end' of the process, namely receiving and answering the initial telephone calls, displays more similarities than differences when policing is compared to commercial call centres.
- 1.10 These similarities have also been consistently confirmed by academic research, which points particularly to the relative importance of staff, processes and technology within each environment. In any form of contact centre, staff costs can account for over 90 per cent of the total revenue budget. So human resource management and appropriate skills training are particularly significant to high-quality performance in both the private and the public sector. Problem-solving and decision-making processes are core to achieving organisational goals and objectives in either environment. And the automatic call distribution, customer relationship management and computer telephony integration technologies pioneered in the private sector are now also evident in many police contact centre operations.
- 1.11 In recent years, the contact centre industry has grown at a phenomenal rate, accelerating in the early 1990s and now forming an established and important part of the United Kingdom economy. Contact centres employ 790,000 people, representing 2.8 per cent of the working population – this is expected to rise to one million by 2007. The number employed in call centres has grown by 250 per cent since 1995<sup>2</sup>.
- 1.12 As commercial contact centres develop and continually improve their service, the public's expectations of the police contact centre have dramatically increased. The contact centre has become an influential window into any organisation, and it is increasingly a key determinant of how users view service quality.
- 1.13 One way that the industry has improved and moved forward over the years is through the use and involvement of a number of external bodies which can assist and support contact centre performance.

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<sup>2</sup> *Human resource management in call centres*, Institute of Work Psychology, University of Sheffield and CCA – Holman, Wood, and Stride, 2004.

- 1.14 These include the Call Centre Association, which promotes the delivery of best practice through a wide range of products and services and is accessible to all organisations. Development of and support of call centre managers and supervisors is available through the Call Centre Managers Association, which is a professional association that promotes continuous professional development. The Professional Planning Forum is an organisation that focuses on the development and support of individual professionals responsible for resourcing and call forecasting within contact centres.
- 1.15 Unsurprisingly, given the increasing importance of the subject, contact centre operations have been the subject of considerable research. Despite the variety of theories emerging from such research, eight key drivers of contact centre performance have been consistently identified:
1. customer;
  2. culture;
  3. strategy and organisational structure;
  4. human resources;
  5. skills, training and education;
  6. location and facilities;
  7. technology; and
  8. management information systems.
- 1.16 Research also shows that these drivers are essentially interdependent. Customer satisfaction is important to continued commercial success; employee empowerment is vital to delivering customer satisfaction; empowerment necessitates the employee having the skills and tools to deliver a high quality of service; and a receptive and innovative business culture must underpin each of the other elements.
- 1.17 To survive and prosper, commercial organisations must put customer satisfaction at the heart of their business philosophy. By researching customer perceptions and expectations, they can feed back the relevant requirements to employees, who in turn improve service delivery, thereby increasing public satisfaction. In short, research typically asserts the importance of customer satisfaction and the human aspects of staff performance, in particular the ability to communicate and build a rapport. The private sector clearly identifies contact centre operations as more than just a necessary business process. They are recognised as essential to building and retaining a sound customer base and are therefore seen as a vital business investment. The budgetary provision largely reflects this realisation.
- 1.18 But while the focus on customer satisfaction is evident in the commercial world, a different picture emerges from the public sector. Public service operations have always had to work within budgetary constraints imposed by local and national government. At the time when the call centre industry was booming and public service call centres first emerged (late 1990s) the public sector entered a period in which financial constraints were tightened, 'Best Value' audits became mandatory, and comparison with alternative, private sector supply became a guiding principle.

- 1.19 Public sector call centres became popular with those seeking modernisation as a means to deliver the objectives of Best Value. Relevant unions would, however, point out the economies of scale involved<sup>3</sup>. They argued that gains were made at the expense of staff, since they often involved ever more challenging and more pressured working practices<sup>4</sup>.

### CONTACT MANAGEMENT IN THE POLICE SERVICE

- 1.20 The growth of commercial and public sector call centres has been echoed in policing. In the last ten years, 33 of the 43 police forces in England and Wales have centralised or consolidated their call handling function, either physically or using technology to deliver a 'virtual' centralised contact centre service. Undoubtedly, the Best Value principles and the drive for economies of scale have played a large part in this move. In addition, the implementation of the AIRWAVE national digital radio project (rolled out nationally between February 2001 and May 2005) encouraged consolidation of control rooms, increasingly linked directly to the contact management facilities.
- 1.21 Despite the apparent concerted and co-ordinated move towards centralised control and contact centres, a core feature of the police service in England and Wales is the largely autonomous nature of each of the 43 forces – the aim being to meet local policing needs. This is a significant strength in that it encourages individual innovation and tailoring of service to meet specific community needs and preferences. But it makes national standardisation very difficult and inevitably results in numerous different, and often incompatible, versions of any particular initiative, in particular information technology (IT) solutions.
- 1.22 While contact management is only partially about IT, the inability to achieve nationally standard approaches is best illustrated in the field of IT. This failure was heavily criticised by the Bichard Inquiry<sup>5</sup>:

**“When local police budgets are matters for local accountability, it is not easy to reach a common acceptance of IT solutions. PITO will be disappointed nevertheless not to have been more successful in this vital area.”** (para. 4.21, page 130)

- 1.23 The Police Information Technology Organisation (PITO) was established in 1998 specifically to identify and supply national products, but its track record is poor<sup>6</sup>. As a result, individual forces have gone their own way and over 80 per cent of all expenditure on police IT is spent by individual forces on very different products.
- 1.24 Given the above, it is unsurprising that contact centres vary enormously, not only in technology but also in form, content and ethos. Despite the many differences, however, there are core activities that form an end-to-end process in responding to calls for assistance from the public (Figure 1):

<sup>3</sup> *The thin front line: call handling in police control rooms*, Bain, Taylor and Dutton, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> *Taylorism, targets and the pursuit of quantity and quality by call centre management*, Bain, Watson, et al, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> *Bichard Inquiry report*, June 2004.

<sup>6</sup> The Home Office, *The McFarland Inquiry: report of the review of the Police Information Technology Organisation (PITO)*, 2005 – [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs4/ReportReviewofPITO.pdf](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs4/ReportReviewofPITO.pdf)

FIGURE 1: THE RESPONSE TO A CALL FOR ASSISTANCE



- 1.25 In 2004, HMIC carried out a comprehensive Baseline Assessment of police forces, examining performance across all major areas of the policing business. The performance of every force was graded in each of the service areas, and was assessed as *Excellent*, *Good*, *Fair* or *Poor*. Call management was identified as the second poorest performing function overall (of 16 graded) and was one of only three activities where no force was assessed as *Excellent*, while 27 forces were rated as *Fair* or *Poor*.
- 1.26 The problems invariably centred around technology and people. Too many forces have been unable or unwilling to commit the resources needed to develop a call handling function capable of meeting the burgeoning demand for police assistance and information. And even where the technology is fit for the purpose, there are chronic problems in retaining a sufficient number of appropriately skilled staff, effectively managed, to provide a high-quality service to callers. Deficiencies in the control room not only jeopardise important objectives around public confidence in the police but lead to wasteful patterns of deployment, sending officers to jobs that should be resolved over the telephone.
- 1.27 HMIC's findings reinforce the need to learn lessons from research in the commercial sector. The eight business drivers identified by the private sector are just as important to effective contact management within policing. Many citizens call the police only once, and so police contact centres have just one chance of getting it right – immediate action to improve performance is required.

## THE WAY FORWARD FOR POLICE CONTACT MANAGEMENT

- 1.28 The Government has set out a clear resolve that it will "improve markedly the responsiveness and customer service culture of the police ... The first contact people have with the police – wherever that takes place – is crucial in determining people's perception of and confidence in policing. It is an area where we and the police service itself believe there is a pressing need for improvement." (*Building communities, beating crime*, 2004).
- 1.29 This exhortation is an indictment of the service's failure to respond effectively to earlier reviews and reports, including the Policing Bureaucracy Taskforce, HMIC's thematic inspection on reassurance, *Open all hours*, and the National Policing Plan 2005/08. More recently, the service has taken up the issue at a national level and formed a tripartite review group, involving the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), the Home Office and the Association of Police Authorities (APA). This group has acknowledged the scale of the problem and the need for national standards. In April 2005, following widespread consultation, the National Call Handling Standards (NCHS) were published by ACPO (they are available at [www.policereform.co.uk](http://www.policereform.co.uk)).

- 1.30 There is still much to do to turn these aspirational standards into improved performance, but the target is full implementation in England and Wales by April 2006. HMIC has been closely involved in their production and welcomes them as a positive move to national standardisation and improvement, but they are only a first step.
- 1.31 This report seeks to complement and build upon the NCHS. It examines contact management through each of the accepted key drivers (as identified in Chapters 2–9) before drawing together good practice and the lessons to be learned, and proposing a way forward built upon structured and consistent national standards and robust performance assessment.
- 1.32 Each chapter contains:
- an introduction – to position the issue in context;
  - a bulleted summary of what 'good' performance should look like;
  - a description of current good practice in the commercial sector;
  - the reality of current police performance; and
  - recommendations for improvement.

### HOW TO USE THIS REPORT

- 1.33 The report is based on the eight key business drivers and can be navigated on that basis. However, the underlying process within contact management is the handling of an individual call for assistance, which incorporates the three sub-stages identified in Figure 1, earlier in this chapter, namely:



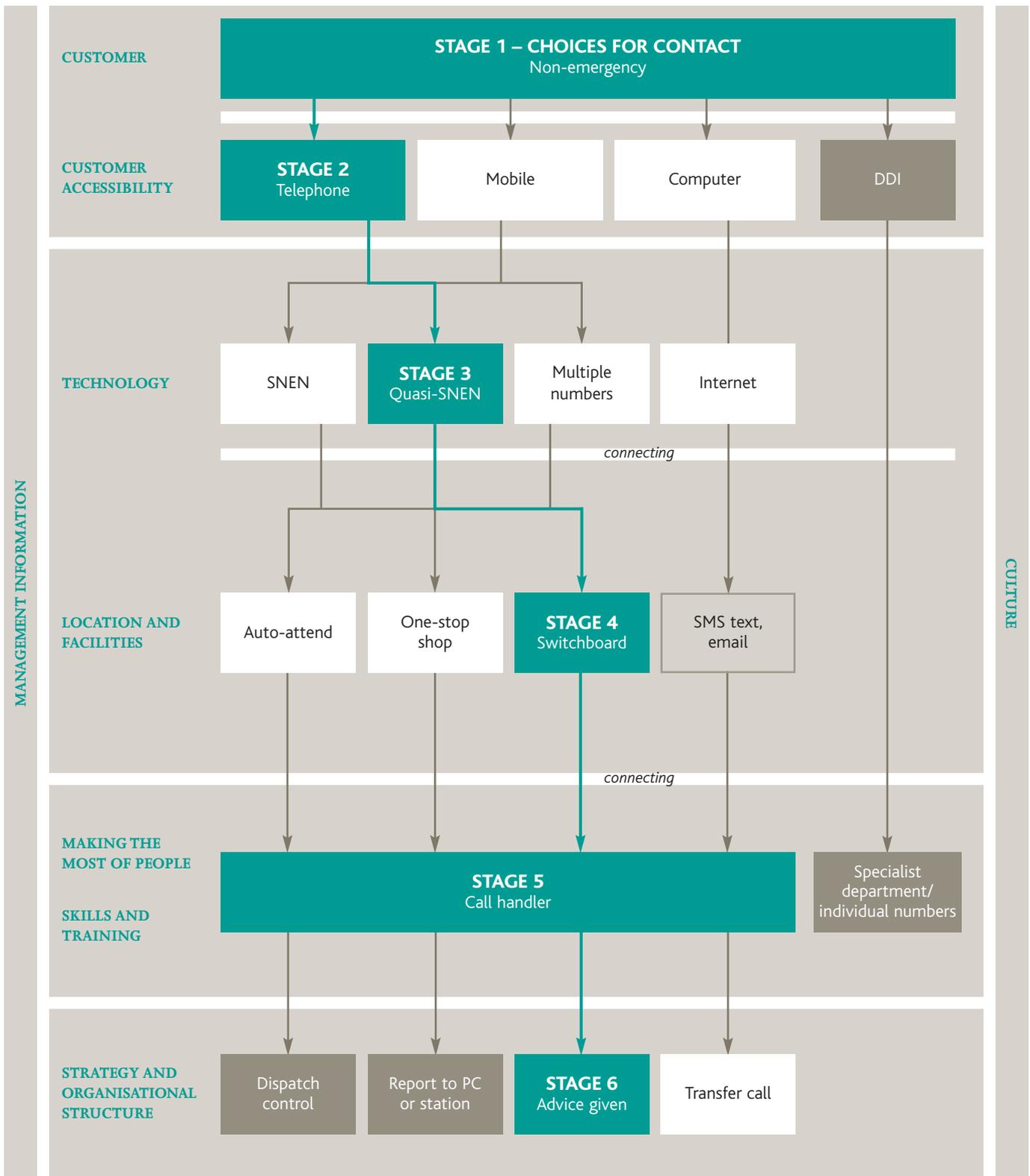
- 1.34 Within each of these sub-stages there are a number of options available, for example:
- **customer/call demand** – offering accessibility and choice to callers via telephone, mobile, computer or direct dial facilities;
  - **initial call capture** – using technology options to engage and route callers via a single non-emergency number, multiple numbers or internet; and
  - **handling and decision** – having skilled staff handling the call to allow a timely and appropriate decision and response.
- 1.35 At each sub-stage of the process, a different combination of the business drivers has precedence. The diagram on the next two pages provides a visual representation of the 'life of a call' for assistance through the sub-stages of the process, highlighting the relevant business drivers.
- 1.36 There is no single best route through the options available, and any selected route has advantages and disadvantages, as discussed further in the relevant chapters of the report. The following representation does, however, offer another way to navigate the key driver chapters by highlighting one 'route map' through the options and flagging the relevant references within the report. The same approach may be taken incorporating alternative options. On the CD-ROM version of this report, hyperlinks will direct readers to specific chapters.

# 1. Calling the police for assistance

## LIFE OF A CALL: ACTIVITIES AND PROCESSES MAPPED

The purpose of this section is to walk through the life of one call and demonstrate how activities in the eight operational business areas impact on the customer experience. It can be used to navigate through this report and has quick references to other parts of the report where a more detailed explanation is given.

Whichever option is chosen to contact the service, the eight operational business areas apply. Whether you require an email response or a phone response, investment in staff training and resource planning is still required. The only difference is in the amount of staff requiring skills and training to carry out the transaction.



## STAGE 1 – The choice (non-emergency)

Callers need to decide whether they have an emergency or not, then what media are available to contact their force, where they can find them, and what the service provides.

### > Chapter 2 – Putting the customer first

43% of the adult population have had contact with the police in a 12 month period (p.18).

## STAGE 2. Method of contact (telephone)

Which number to dial?

Single number, multiple numbers that reach a centralised switchboard (Quasi-SNEN) or multiple numbers?

### > Chapter 2 – Putting the customer first

40% of forces use SMS texting to increase access options (p.26).

## STAGE 3. Type of number (quasi-SNEN)

For this example the force has multiple numbers which go through to a centralised switchboard.

### > Chapter 8 – Getting the best from technology

70% of customer relationship management systems (CRMs) fail (p.87).  
New initiatives are improving systems integration (p.93).

### Connecting

Caller ring tolerance in the time it takes to answer a non-emergency call is higher than in an emergency situation. There is still a maximum acceptable amount of time that a caller would wait.

### > Chapter 9 – Using information to improve performance

Few forces measure abandoned call rates (p.102).

## STAGE 4. First contact (switchboard)

Call is answered and evaluated prior to being transferred.

This is the gateway to the police service and requires politeness, empathy, reassurance, knowledge and experience to satisfy caller needs.

### > Chapter 7 – The right location and facilities

Major move in recent years to centralised locations, including new-builds (p.77).  
No consolidation of good practice or lessons learned (p.81).

### > Chapter 5 – Making the most of our people

84% of forces have an HR strategy but few have one specific to contact centre (p.61).  
37% of forces carry out staff surveys (p.63).  
17% of forces carry out exit interviews when staff leave (p.63).

### Connecting

This call is now transferred for further action.

### > Chapter 9 – Using information to improve performance

Few forces measure abandoned call rates when transferring a call to their main contact centre (p.102).

## STAGE 5. Call handler (call is answered)

A skilled call taker will prioritise, grade and action the call after obtaining good-quality information.

### > Chapter 3 – Getting the business culture right

Basic knowledge base of some senior managers in contact centre management (p.36).  
Recognising the importance of contact management to core business (p.36).

### > Chapter 6 – Professionalism through skills and training

The introduction of mentors and tutors has boosted morale and performance (p.73).

## STAGE 6. Initial resolution (advised)

The caller will be advised of the action to be taken by the force and of any relevant feedback to their enquiry.

### > Chapter 9 – Using information to improve performance

30% of forces use computerised workforce management systems (p.104).

### > Chapter 4 – Effective strategy and structures

30% of forces have no call management strategy (p.45).  
Contact centre structure doesn't matter provided proper processes and procedures are in place (p.55).



## 2. Putting the customer first



## 2. Putting the customer first

### INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 It has been argued that the concept of 'the customer' is difficult to apply to the police service because of the term's association with the purchase of goods or services and the unique relationship between the public and police. An easier way to visualise 'customers' may therefore be as groups or individuals who "receive and use or are directly affected by the products and services of an organisation"<sup>7</sup>. In this way, victims, witnesses, offenders, callers for assistance, citizens and tax-payers can all be viewed as 'customers' or users of the service provided by the police.
- 2.2 Customers are those external and internal parties that the contact centre staff interact with during their day-to-day work. Therefore, customers cover a broad demographic spectrum, as they ultimately include anyone who experiences the contact centre service<sup>8</sup>. People who contact the police expect to receive a service that meets their specific needs, and the extent to which this happens will strongly influence their perceptions of the force and policing as a whole.
- 2.3 The extent of the interaction with contact management should not be underestimated. The average person spends 41 hours a year on the telephone to contact centres, and while one in three people is regularly held on line for more than 20 minutes, one in twenty reported holding for more than one hour<sup>9</sup>. Research shows that 43 per cent of the adult population will have had contact with the police in a 12-month period.
- 2.4 The importance of adopting a more customer-focused approach is now generally accepted, not least because the Government has made it a key principle of police reform, and because of the expressions of dissatisfaction by the public themselves.

**“Service is becoming a critical factor in the minds of customers. I wouldn't want to be an investor in any organisation that fails to recognise this.”** City analyst

- 2.5 But to truly 'put the customer first' requires more than tacit acknowledgement of the issue. It needs the police service to:
- value the customer experience; and
  - improve customer accessibility.

### A. VALUING THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

- 2.6 The customer experience is more than just the first contact or a snapshot in time. It takes in the whole process, from finding out how to contact the organisation through to resolution of the issue and the lasting impression that the contact makes.

<sup>7</sup> *Business process re-engineering*, glossary of terms. [www.gao.gov/special.pubs/bprag/bprgloss.htm](http://www.gao.gov/special.pubs/bprag/bprgloss.htm)

<sup>8</sup> *Contact centre benchmarking project report*, Advantage West Midlands, 2004.

<sup>9</sup> *Future Foundation* magazine, July 2005.

**WHAT SHOULD 'GOOD' PERFORMANCE LOOK LIKE?**

- 2.7 To demonstrate it values the customer experience, a force should:
- identify, through consultation and analysis, the different customer groupings relevant to contact management;
  - place customer feedback at the centre of organisational thinking and planning;
  - ***ensure that a variety of processes are in place to regularly consult customers and use these results to improve services;***
  - ***establish a system for monitoring complaints and positive feedback, to resolve repeat problems and spread good practice;***
  - ***provide methods for keeping customers informed on progress of particular incidents or enquiries;*** and
  - recognise the important part played by staff in determining the customer experience.

(Note: The elements above highlighted in bold italics represent issues already included, either in full or in part, in the NCHS – see [www.policereform.co.uk](http://www.policereform.co.uk))

**WHAT IS COMMERCIAL GOOD PRACTICE?**

- 2.8 The commercial sector invariably 'segments' its customer base – firms identify the different needs of differing groups, and then tailor their service accordingly (see the good practice case study below).

**GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY: PROVIDING A TAILORED CUSTOMER SERVICE**

Thomas Cook Signature is currently rated as one of the best travel companies in the UK, with several major travel industry awards to its credit. Operating in a highly competitive market, it has developed its brand to deliver a tailored service that is designed around 'what the customer wants'.

It achieves this is by having a dedicated research team, supported by a dedicated analyst, whose techniques include post-holiday questionnaires, customer ring-back, mystery shopping, complaints analysis and the use of focus groups.

The analysis is used to redesign the business by developing specific training packages based on the customer experience. Information is also communicated to frontline staff so that they can continually improve the customer experience. Thomas Cook also uses customer feedback to eliminate processes and actions that customers identify as having little or no value.

The benefits of this approach are evident in:

- customer growth in a highly competitive market;
- increased staff satisfaction;
- good staff retention levels;
- low turnover rates; and
- low staff sickness levels.

- 2.9 The customer experience is particular to each individual, but in order to put the customer first, organisations need to know what makes a good customer experience for the majority of callers. Just as no single experience is typical, no single method for research can cover the whole spectrum of customer experiences or needs. A variety of techniques are used to measure customer interaction and to gain an insight into customer perception and expectations. The most common methods have been extensively researched (see below).

### RESEARCHING CUSTOMER PERCEPTIONS

#### Research from 169 call centres showed:

- **65 per cent conduct surveys of customers;**
- **59 per cent use call-back strategies;**
- **43 per cent benchmark their agents;**
- **40 per cent conduct mystery shopping using their own staff;**
- **38 per cent employ external agents for mystery shopping.**

Source: *Achieving excellence in call centres 2002* – Collinson, Grant, and Call Centre Focus.

- **84 per cent use customer complaints;**
- **71 per cent use customer satisfaction surveys;**
- **36 per cent identify customer expectations and perceptions.**

Source: Merchants, *Global contact centre benchmarking report*, 2005.

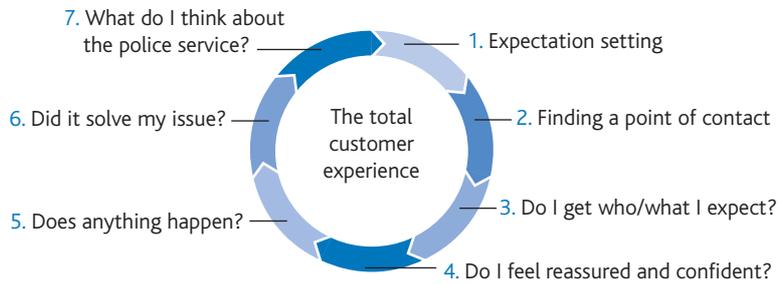
- 2.10 Such research reveals that customer expectations are increasing significantly. The public do not regularly make contact with different police forces, as they do with numerous commercial contact centres, and it is likely that their expectations of the police service are benchmarked against those commercial experiences. The service is being assessed in the same critical light as every other customer-facing organisation.

**“The customer experience is not the next competitive battleground, it is already here!”**

Stuart McCullough, Director, Lexus GB Ltd

- 2.11 An emerging consensus is that addressing the ‘total customer experience’ is an absolutely key element to securing customer satisfaction and co-operation. In effect, interaction is a cycle that starts with finding how to make contact, then making contact, assessing the response, examining any resultant action, deciding whether the action solved the problem and using the results to shape future expectation. A number of companies, including British Telecom, have built their service improvement strategy around plotting and analysing the total customer experience. The relevant police contact management cycle might look like Figure 2 overleaf.

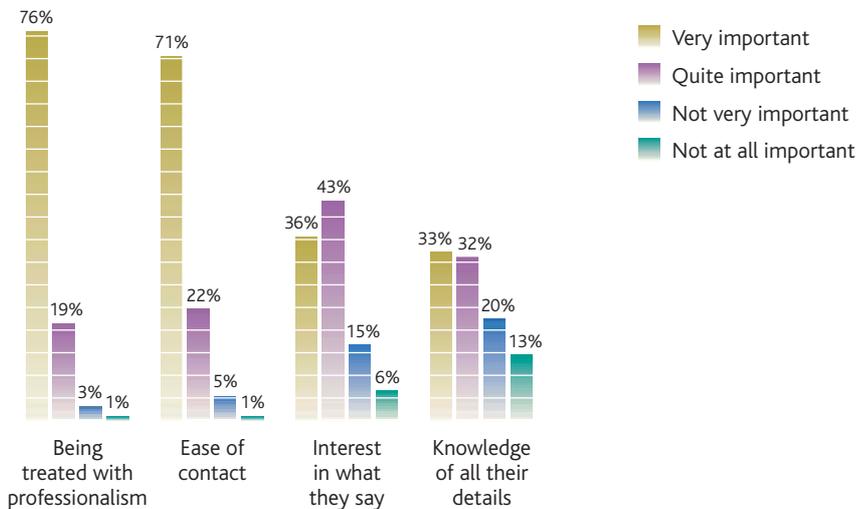
FIGURE 2: THE 'TOTAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE' IN CONTACT MANAGEMENT



Source: Nicola Millard, BT

2.12 Another source of consensus is the role of contact centre employees in raising customer satisfaction. The customer expects to engage in a relationship with a staff member who displays empathy, understanding and reassurance. A study by the Henley Centre<sup>10</sup> (2004) reinforced that the way in which the handler deals with the call and the rapport established are every bit as important as the actual accuracy of what is said or who says it (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3: WHAT DO CALLERS RATE AS MOST IMPORTANT?



Source: Henley Centre, 2004

<sup>10</sup> *Teleculture: the citizen speaks*, Henley Centre, 2004.

- 2.13 The call handler needs to exude professionalism and confidence to meet the caller's needs. They can do so only if they feel satisfied and empowered within their role<sup>11</sup>. The importance of the employee role is widely recognised by 'captains of industry', as demonstrated in the quotes below.

**“70% of customer brand perception is determined by experiences with people.**

**‘I worry about employees first, customers second and shareholders third.’** Richard Branson, CEO Virgin Group, 2004

**‘Happy employees means happy customers means happy shareholders.’** Robert Crawford, Royal Bank of Scotland, 2003

**‘In a service business like ours you can only look after the customer by looking after your staff. So the route to creating value from customers is through the management of your people.’** Terry Leahy, CEO Tesco, 2002”

Datapoint research 2005

- 2.14 In terms of organisational thinking and service delivery, the private sector is developing its contact centre business with the customer experience at the centre of its philosophy for sound economic reasons – the 'bottom line'. Unlike the private sector the police business is not about increasing profits, it is about protecting lives. Nonetheless, customer service is a shared goal and police forces have many processes, management functions and service delivery targets that are similar to, albeit more challenging than, commercial contact centres.

### HOW GOOD IS CURRENT POLICE PERFORMANCE?

- 2.15 Perhaps the most disappointing finding of the inspection is that many forces do not recognise the need to be more customer-focused. The core objectives of preventing, reducing and detecting crime rely heavily on a healthy relationship between police and public, emphasised by a two-way flow of information. The public must be encouraged to engage with the police and hopefully see this engagement as a partnership that makes a difference.
- 2.16 No force can show evidence of a comprehensive approach to customer segmentation, or a structured, consistent method for identifying contact centre customer needs or expectations. A range of different surveying methods are deployed for general customer satisfaction: 60 per cent of forces use customer ring-back, but 77 per cent still use paper-based surveys sent out to customers some weeks or months after they have experienced the service. Some 18 per cent of UK forces use 'mystery shopper' approaches, where staged calls are made to test timeliness and quality of service, and a few forces have conducted one-off pieces of research. There is still a significant reliance on the annual British Crime Survey for an indication of public satisfaction, so figures relate mainly to victims of a limited number of crime categories.

<sup>11</sup> *The empowerment of service workers: what, why, how and when*, Sloane Management Review vol. 33, 1992.

- 2.17 Even where relatively similar methods are deployed, the timing, sample sizes and extent to which the results are used to develop and improve the service vary significantly. In some forces, heads of contact centres have received no feedback whatsoever from the results of customer satisfaction surveys conducted centrally by their forces. Others have the results but do not routinely communicate them to staff to effect improvements to service or changes to training packages for call handlers. On a positive note, two fieldwork forces make proactive use of complaints and consultation data to inform improvements in the delivery of contact management services (see the good practice example overleaf).

#### **GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY: MONITORING COMPLAINTS**

Humberside Police currently measures the number of complaints received as a direct result of contact centre service delivery. It categorises the complaints and uses the results to change and inform the way it delivers the service. The results are fed back to individuals and are also used to design specific training packages in order to address the root cause of any significant complaint category.

Though this is a relatively new initiative, it has already resulted in:

- increased customer satisfaction;
- a reduction in the time and cost of dealing with customer complaints;
- the promotion of a more positive image of the force;
- staff empowerment and higher morale; and
- specific training packages leading to improved staff and customer satisfaction.

- 2.18 The inception of the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) in April 2004 has increased the avenues available for handling public complaints and put more emphasis on monitoring their frequency and nature. The importance of complaints feedback in organisational learning is a key aspect of the IPCC's ethos, and the impending publication of its statutory guidance (scheduled for December 2005) will further reinforce this.
- 2.19 More generally in the police service, as in many other organisations, the customer experience has become one-sided, with most proactive communication originating with the customer. By listening closely, forces can identify customers' issues, and by sharing this information with staff they will be in a better position to deliver first-time resolution. For example, team supervisors from North Wales Police's contact centre attend local community meetings. The objective is to create a two-way communication process with customers and potential customers, with feedback to the centre being actioned to improve the quality of service provided. Further easy gains could be made by applying the principles identified in the Datapoint research, which are summarised on the next page.

### HOW TO IMPROVE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

- Enable customers to communicate with you at the time of their first contact experience.
- Let your customers provide feedback easily when they are most likely to – i.e. at the time of contact – by providing a convenient and wide range of channels, such as the phone, the web or a kiosk.
- Collect customer feedback in a meaningful and structured way for easy analysis.
- Collect quantitative (as well as qualitative) customer feedback so that it is measurable.
- Ensure this information is available in a way that is relevant and timely for staff at every level in the business.
- Route customer experience information immediately to the accountable level of business or individual. For example, management product teams, marketing and operations should have easy and transparent access to information on the customer experience.
- Ensure that frontline employees have information regarding the consistency and quality of service delivery.
- Show customers what you are doing to improve things.

Datapoint, 2005

2.20 Some companies analyse a force's customer experience by carrying out interviews and listening to calls using trained personnel who understand what drives customer-facing behaviour<sup>12</sup>. This approach is used to improve the customer experience in a way that suits the culture of the organisation. It can help to:

- provide an independent analysis of how it feels to interact with the police;
- identify the key issues that, if addressed, can improve the customer experience;
- generate a qualitative and quantitative measurement framework;
- provide a multimedia communication tool for engaging the workforce and generating motivation and inspiration to move forward together;
- impact on a force's own research, training and development; and
- inspire people and act as a catalyst for change.

#### RECOMMENDATION 1

All forces should develop a detailed, structured and timely process to capture the customer experience and satisfaction levels.

<sup>12</sup> For example: Harding and Yorke, *Empathy rating index* [www.empathy.co.uk](http://www.empathy.co.uk)

- 2.21 It is essential that the results of this research and analysis are fed back to those who provide the service: the staff in the contact centre. Staff should be aware of customers' perceptions and needs and, thus, should be able to tailor the service they deliver to better meet expectations. When mapped against other performance indicators, customer satisfaction results can therefore be used to improve performance where appropriate.

### B. IMPROVING CUSTOMER ACCESSIBILITY

- 2.22 In providing full access to their services for users, police forces must take into consideration the diverse make-up of those wanting to access or communicate with them and be fully aware of the importance placed on a variety of access methods.

#### WHAT SHOULD 'GOOD' PERFORMANCE LOOK LIKE?

- 2.23 For any organisation to be genuinely accessible to its customers, it should:
- ***provide a comprehensive range of access points together with clear information on their use and availability;***
  - ensure timely and appropriate response to all forms of contact media; and
  - ensure that no group or individual is unfairly disadvantaged in gaining access.

(Note: The element above highlighted in bold italics represents issues already included, either in full or in part, in the NCHS.)

#### WHAT IS CURRENT COMMERCIAL GOOD PRACTICE?

- 2.24 The profile of an emerging 24/7, 'multi-channel literate' society means that as citizens adapt and change their preferred mode of making contact with the world around them, organisations must increase the choice of accessibility channels to provide the service expected by the public. Effective accessibility channels need to be organised and designed around customer experience and measured against customer satisfaction. The provision of good customer accessibility depends on both contact centre infrastructure and the right culture to interact with consumer-aware customers.
- 2.25 In relation to infrastructure, the contact centre technical strategy needs to be based on multi-channel access that can accommodate all channels of communication, both in current and in near-term future use. These include Short Message Service (SMS) texting, type-talk, minicom, language line, email and internet, live speech, speech-enabled Interactive Voice Response (IVR), webchat, fax, self-serve and kiosks. As the London bombings of July 2005 demonstrated, there will also be a need to cope with downloaded digital images from witnesses to events using mobile camera telephones.
- 2.26 Good contact centre accessibility means that these multi-channel access points are available to the community as and when they need them. They must be well managed and it will be necessary to take into consideration embedded public perceptions when implementing any part of multi-channel access infrastructure. Recent research indicates that 69 per cent of the public do not wish to deal with an automated response when calling the police, and 52 per cent would not ring again if they experienced bad IVR. Some 67 per cent of customers consider a company's website a highly important factor, while 47 per cent have had difficulty with websites and have not been able to get meaningful support or assistance over the phone<sup>13</sup>.

#### SUGGESTION A

Detailed, structured and timely contact centre customer satisfaction level results should be used to build performance indicators for improvement. Forces should then feed these results to staff to address issues identified and use them to improve performance where appropriate.



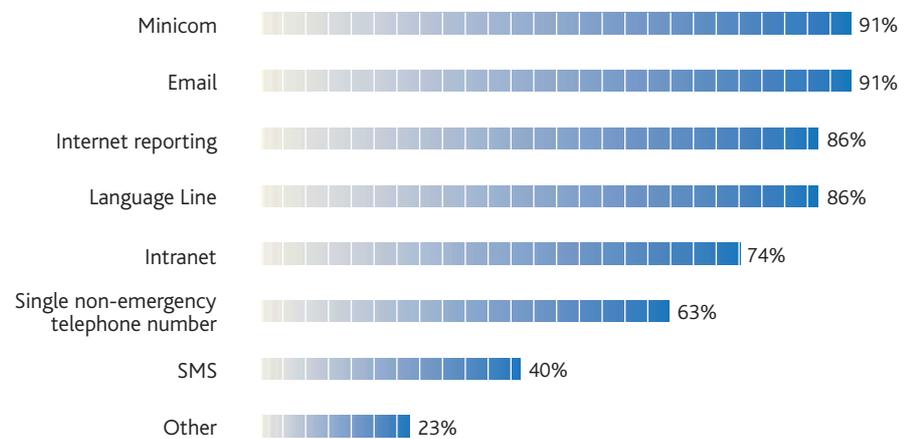
<sup>13</sup> Datapoint research, 2005.

- 2.27 Whatever contact centre model is decided upon, it must succeed in the context of a public that rates contact with call centres above rush hour traffic and delayed trains as its most stressful daily experience. Accessibility routes need to be well communicated to the people who need them, or they will fail to satisfy the customer. Customer behaviour shows that people will invariably default to accessing live operator assistance and thereby recreate the experience of long queues, with all the frustrations they bring. Stream International, an award-winning, multi-national company providing customer service solutions to some of the largest computer and peripherals manufacturers in the world, has introduced a webchat facility into its contact centre. One of the most common requests received via webchat, however, is for the company to contact the customer by telephone.
- 2.28 A note of caution: the culture of multi-channel behaviour is still in its infancy and will continue to evolve rapidly through the expected lifespan of this current generation of customer service technologies. Therefore, broad-based adaptability is paramount. Getting accessibility right and ensuring that it works effectively can bring benefits to the force and the public.

### HOW GOOD IS CURRENT POLICE PERFORMANCE?

- 2.29 One area where the service has made significant strides is expanding channels of communication with customers and potential customers beyond the conventional (Figure 4).

**FIGURE 4: PERCENTAGE OF CONTACT CENTRES THAT EMPLOY ALTERNATIVE TECHNOLOGIES OR FACILITIES FOR CUSTOMER CONTACT**



Source: response to HMIC questionnaire to forces, November 2004

- 2.30 Forces have developed a variety of methods for using and receiving information from the public. The development of these technologies is an acknowledgement of the need to be more inclusive in the services that forces provide; the use of these different communication channels is certain to increase in the future. The sending of SMS text messages has evolved from being a mobile-to-mobile, consumer service to being a highly effective, reliable and cost-effective method for organisations to keep in contact with their clients and partners. SMS texting is also the favoured method of contact for the hearing-impaired, 86 per cent of whom use text as their chosen

method of contact – the police service needs to recognise this in expanding its range of contact techniques (see the good practice case studies below).

#### GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDIES: TEXT MESSAGING – OPERATIONAL USE AND ACCESSIBILITY

Staffordshire Police uses SMS texting at football matches to gain real-time football intelligence. A special number is issued by the force prior to match day so that any member of the public with intelligence can feed this into the force. This hugely successful use of text messaging has resulted in a number of significant arrests of hardline football hooligans.

Hampshire Constabulary currently operates a dedicated 80999 text number for people who are hearing-impaired. Such individuals register with the force and use the text messaging system to report any type of incident. All text messages are initially forwarded to a third party who transfers it to an email and forwards it to the Force Control Room for action. A reply to the text is returned in a similar manner.

This system is backed up with the use of a Nokia Communications keyboard mobile telephone, located within the Control Room. The telephone provides an audible warning to advise of an incoming message. If the primary system fails to operate, a return message is forwarded to the sender using the telephone keypad. At present Nokia is the only company that manufactures this type of telephone, able to both send and receive information in this manner. But it is 'old technology', with a bulky phone design.

- 2.31 A note of caution: SMS messages are not always immediate. They can sometimes take up to two days to reach their destination. Some forces using this facility have, however, introduced a process where acknowledgement receipts are automatically generated to reduce the risk of missing any messages and to give the sender some assurance of receipt.
- 2.32 In 2000, the Government published its strategic framework for modernising public services<sup>14</sup>, identifying a need to establish new ways of doing business, implement common standards and policies, develop e-business strategies and provide services that are accessible via government and other portals. HMIC's 2001 report, *Open all hours*, devoted a whole section to e-policing. The report detailed the steps that the police service needed to take in order to keep pace with the changes and challenges of the electronic era. One of the technologies identified was that of interactive touch-screen kiosks. This technology is not new – the banking sector has used it for many years, and other commercial enterprises, such as air and rail companies, regard self-serve as a cost-effective approach to customer service. It gives customers what they want at the time they want it, as the overwhelming majority of consumers want to control their own experience.
- 2.33 New advances in kiosk design and software development have made the concept attractive to the police service as it strives to increase public reassurance through increased availability and visibility. E-policing will allow much more accessibility to police services as well as making information available to communities using touch-screen technology. A number of forces have recently started to introduce this technology, including Lothian and Borders, Tayside, Strathclyde, Lincolnshire,

#### SUGGESTION B

All forces should produce automatically generated confirmation messages to acknowledge the receipt of a text message. This should be publicised as part of a contact management communications strategy.

<sup>14</sup> *E-Government: a strategic framework for public services in the information age*, Cabinet Office, 2000.

Merseyside, Avon and Somerset, Bedfordshire and Cleveland, although the benefits have yet to be evaluated.

- 2.34 Whether via kiosk or direct from home computers, internet access to policing services is certainly increasing. Some 86 per cent of forces use the internet for a variety of functions, such as online crime reporting, lost property, publishing responses to frequently asked questions (FAQs), and providing a raft of information on how to access various policing services. Thames Valley Police has won an award for the look and design of its site, but internet access is still under development in some police forces (see the good practice case study below).

### **GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY: CUSTOMER ACCESSIBILITY**

Northgate Information Solutions is a major supplier of software applications and outsourcing solutions for public services. It is currently working with Merseyside Police to design a system whereby a caller who reports an incident or case is given a PIN code, allowing them to later access the internet and get an update on the incident they have reported.

- 2.35 The increasing use of web-enabled services throws up another challenge for forces: to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the content of their websites. Site errors have the greatest impact on website performance, and a target of zero errors is reasonable. Errors can be regarded as inevitable, especially on large dynamic sites, but they are also unacceptable, as they are generally unnecessary and relatively easy to remedy. Software solutions are available so that forces can ensure errors are easily identified on a continual basis. One of the biggest failings identified in a recent report<sup>15</sup> provided to HMIC was in relation to accessibility to sites and speed of response.
- 2.36 Forces are also beginning to use these technologies to provide callers with a follow-up call, to give updates on their case or incident (as demonstrated in the good practice case study below).

### **GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY: CUSTOMER ENQUIRY UPDATE**

Cleveland Police is using its automatic call distribution facility to automatically re-contact customers with an updated position on their incident or enquiry. At the initial point of contact each caller is given a personal reference number and a direct dial-in to the helpdesk. Initially, some customers complained because they did not want to be re-contacted and did not require an update, and so the force is now changing the process to ask if customers want access to this service. This should result in cost savings and increased customer satisfaction levels.

- 2.37 The minimum systems which all forces should adopt to improve ease of access, which should be clearly published, are: telephone and SMS numbers, email addresses, internet web addresses, minicom and talk-type numbers (both are systems that enable the deaf and hard of hearing to make telephone contact) and Language Line (one of a number of telephone interpreter services available). The current position is

<sup>15</sup> *Website testing and ranking of police sites*, SiteMorse, 2005 [www.sitemorse.com](http://www.sitemorse.com)

very positive with 86 per cent of forces providing internet reporting, 40 per cent providing SMS services and 91 per cent of forces providing email services.

#### RECOMMENDATION 2

All forces should, as a minimum requirement, provide access to their service via standard telephony, internet, SMS text facilities, email, and the equivalent of minicom, talk-type and Language Line.

- 2.38** One issue highlighted during the inspection is that some forces did not have a pre-recorded message at the beginning of calls made to inform the caller that their call is being recorded for policing purposes, which is a requirement of the First Principle of the Data Protection Act 1998<sup>16</sup>. Although the Information Commissioner's Office confirm that it is not necessary for 999 calls, it is a mandatory requirement for all non-emergency calls.

#### Single non-emergency number (SNEN)

- 2.39** Some 63 per cent of forces currently have a localised single non-emergency number for the public to access their services, and most have not experienced any major problems with its implementation. There have, however, been many lessons learned during implementation. One of the more regular issues raised by customers is the structure of the number, in some cases as long as eleven digits and not easily remembered. In some areas the culture shock of calling a central number rather than a local station caused initial concerns. In a small number of cases, significant underestimation of demand led to poor service and increased caller dissatisfaction.
- 2.40** The current national project with perhaps the greatest potential to improve customer access to the police service is the national SNEN project. This project is driven and funded by the Home Office, working with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. By 2008, the aim is that citizens will access a single non-emergency number for all police forces in England and Wales. The number will also provide a single point of contact for a whole range of local government services. There are, however, a number of significant issues relating to the achievement of the target date, including:
- scoping the volume and type of demand that might be generated<sup>17</sup>;
  - cultural issues around public resistance to remote police contact centres, with perceived loss of local knowledge and accountability;
  - cultural and structural issues within police contact management;
  - ownership, recruitment, retention and skills base of staff;
  - managing a more complex response to callers; and
  - potential damage to image and confidence in the police if the system does not work well.

#### SUGGESTION C

Forces should, through their Data Protection Officer, examine their processes to ensure that they are complying with the First Principle of the Data Protection Act 1998.

<sup>16</sup> "Personal data shall be processed fairly and lawfully and, in particular, shall not be processed unless – (a) at least one of the conditions in Schedule 2 is met, and (b) in the case of sensitive personal data, at least one of the conditions in Schedule 3 is also met."

<sup>17</sup> See also the John Seddon quote in chapter 9, p.103.

- 2.41 The Home Office will need to ensure that these problems are addressed during the planning and piloting of the national SNEN. In addition, pilot forces will require an exit strategy should the system not work as envisaged.
- 2.42 One possible unintended consequence of SNEN could be an increase in 999 calls, despite the core aim to achieve the opposite. Currently, many people call 999 because they do not know or are unable to get through to the locally published non-emergency number. If this occurs with the national number, then 999 could become swamped at peak times. There is also a risk that a 'successful' implementation could expose significant currently suppressed demand. Alternatively, the widening of the remit to include non-police functions could deter some people from contacting the number with possibly vital intelligence that they wish to be passed only to the police.
- 2.43 Forces considering implementing a local SNEN should not be deterred from doing so, as the national project has a limited scope in terms of the categories of call it will deal with, such as anti-social behaviour, noise and nuisance. It is vital that sufficient time, resources and planning expertise is invested and that lessons learned in local implementation of an SNEN and issues highlighted during this inspection are taken fully into account. It will also be important that the service provided meets the standards of the Quality of Service Commitment and the NCHS.

### CONCLUSION

- 2.44 Valuing the customer and improving accessibility are absolutely key to improving the overall customer experience and increasing both satisfaction and confidence. Forces must make more effort to identify customer groups, understand their needs and expectations, and tailor services accordingly.
- 2.45 Accessibility can be greatly enhanced by opening ever more channels but, undoubtedly, the successful introduction of an SNEN could contribute significantly to the cause. Success of the national SNEN project is not yet assured, however, and all involved must ensure the lessons learned from localised equivalents are fully considered and applied.

### 3. Getting the business culture right



## 3. Getting the business culture right

### INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 A simple definition of business culture, or operating culture as it is often known in the police service, is 'the way we do things around here'. But experience has shown that there is little that is simple or straightforward about culture. It is difficult to define, challenging to measure and hard to change. Perhaps one definition from the private sector can help in the field of police contact management:

**“The culture within a contact centre can be described as the mutual expectations of the management and employees. More specifically, it covers the norms and levels of acceptable behaviour within the contact centre; the extent to which the centre contributes to the success of the overall organisation; type of management style used; level of communication in the centre and between the centre and the whole organisation.”<sup>18</sup>**

- 3.2 This certainly raises some key issues, not least asking just how important this particular function is to the success of the overall organisation. Too often 'culture' is given a negative connotation, but this simply reflects the acknowledged fact that inappropriate culture within an organisation is a key barrier to success. Conversely, the right culture is a key enabler. 'How we do things around here' is an absolutely vital determinant in *what* actually gets done, and the quality of the resultant service.

### WHAT SHOULD 'GOOD' PERFORMANCE LOOK LIKE?

- 3.3 An organisation needs to consciously understand the positive elements of culture that, when applied, can contribute to successful performance. To promote an appropriate business culture, forces need:
- contact management to be recognised as a core element of operational service delivery and supporting organisational objectives;
  - proactive leadership at chief officer and departmental levels;
  - ***clear communication of organisational objectives and the contact management strategy to all employees and shared understanding of individual roles;***
  - a regime that recognises and rewards achievements and performance that support a high-quality service rather than simply creating a target-driven culture;
  - ***processes to regularly consult, engage and survey employees, using results to improve service delivery;*** and
  - ***mechanisms to foster and encourage corporacy and co-ordination between the contact centre and other policing functions.***

(Note: The elements above highlighted in bold italics represent issues already included, either in full or in part, in the NCHS.)

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<sup>18</sup> *Contact centre benchmarking project report*, Advantage West Midlands, 2004.

**WHAT IS COMMERCIAL GOOD PRACTICE?**

- 3.4 Contact management is an integral part of many businesses. It is not a bolt-on. The contact centre is often the first port of call when a member of the public interacts with an organisation and, consequently, the performance of the centre can have a significant bearing on the caller's perception of the organisation as a whole.

**“If we don't get it right at the very start when someone contacts us we are immediately on the back foot. If customers don't think we can even answer the phone properly, how do you think they are going to feel about the rest of what we do?”** CEO financial services company

- 3.5 Leadership is vital to contact management success. Where managers value the contributions of staff, promote a performance focus within a supportive framework and recognise and acknowledge good performance, the result is a focused, motivated workforce and high levels of performance.
- 3.6 Leaders and managers need to understand the overall organisational objectives as well as those of their own command sphere. It is important that leaders give clear and consistent direction. This is more likely if leaders have appropriate skills and training and remain in their post long enough to provide stability and continuity. In the commercial world, as in the police service, the heads of contact centres tend to change on a regular basis. In contrast to most police forces, however, new heads are selected against a post profile and generally already have the required skills.
- 3.7 The staff who work within a contact centre are pivotal to its successful performance. They need to feel valued, be able to contribute towards the centre's development and be clear about its purpose and how it and they contribute to the performance of the organisation as a whole (see the good practice case study below).

**GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY: SHARING THE CONTACT CENTRE'S VISION**

Thomas Cook Signature initiated Project Vision in order to define the strategic vision and direction of the organisation, communicate it to employees and provide a shared understanding of the roles of all staff. This shared understanding is reviewed as part of a biannual staff survey which has indicated a growing awareness and appreciation of the vision and each other's roles since the inception of the project.

'Great place to work' representatives are drawn from each of the business areas of the company and meet as a non-hierarchical working group to discuss how to make Thomas Cook Signature a great place to work. The two-way process empowers representatives to bring issues of concern from colleagues to the group and also allows managers to receive feedback from all employees on specific issues.

- 3.8 The organisation also needs to communicate and celebrate successes, so that staff can share in its vision and feel that their contribution is valued. All too often a culture prevails where managers are more focused on identifying poor performance than rewarding success, which leaves those who are performing well feeling that their efforts have gone unrecognised. (See the good practice case study below.)

### GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY: STAFF RECOGNITION AND INCENTIVE SCHEME

Managers at Stream International recognise the achievements staff make towards achieving organisational goals through an Employee of the Month scheme. Good performance is rewarded in a number of ways, from the issue of certificates which are proudly displayed in the workplace, through to financial rewards. Managers are also incentivised to promote team performance with the prospect of financial rewards. Staff at Stream report feeling valued in the workplace; the staff turnover rate at Stream is five per cent compared to an industry average of 27 per cent in the commercial contact centre sector.

- 3.9 There is a body of evidence that employee empowerment is key to delivering customer satisfaction. Involving staff in the decision-making process and development of the function enhances morale and performance. A Call Centre Association study in 2002<sup>19</sup> cited the use of 'autonomous work groups', whereby employees make decisions about task assignments, work methods and pace. The study found that just over half of all call centres used these quality improvement teams. (See the good practice case study below.)

### GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY: EMPOWERING EMPLOYEES

Thomas Cook Signature carry out staff surveys twice per year in order to:

- identify ways to improve performance;
- identify areas of concern to staff and generate solutions;
- make the best use of staff's awareness of the needs and attitudes of customers;
- use employees' knowledge and experience to aid organisational development;
- identify measures which will increase staff commitment and loyalty, improve attendance and reduce attrition; and
- promote an open culture where people are able to share their ideas in a safe environment.

Results are formally fed back to staff and regular updates are given as to progress against specific actions. Among other changes, the surveys led to a significant reorganisation of the working environment which in turn increased staff satisfaction. Surveys are scored and tracked to enable improvements to be measured.

<sup>19</sup> *Human resource management in call centres*, Institute of Work Psychology, University of Sheffield and CCA – Holman, Wood, and Stride, 2004.

**HOW GOOD IS CURRENT POLICE PERFORMANCE?**

- 3.10 Before contact management can be truly integrated as a core element in policing delivery, it is essential that forces, and in particular chief officers, give proper recognition to the function's importance. At force level, strategies must be aligned, and contact management issues and performance should feature in all strategic and tactical meetings as part of an intelligence-led approach to service delivery. Disappointingly, few forces have integrated contact management into force National Intelligence Model (NIM) processes, and most cannot demonstrate a clear intelligence-led contact management strategy which influences the culture of the function. There are, however, examples of good practice where this has been done effectively (as demonstrated in the good practice case study below).

**GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY: INTEGRATING CONTACT MANAGEMENT INTO NIM PROCESSES**

Lancashire Police has a well developed Call Management strategy which directs the activities of its BCU-based communications centres. An integral component of this policy is the Directed Communications Model, which seeks to use the NIM to drive performance. Each policing division must have efficient and effective systems in place to manage its information exchange and justify deployment decisions arising from this. The model has built-in feedback mechanisms so that developing issues of concern to the community, officers, supervisors and managers can be fed back and addressed as part of the tasking process. The Directed Communication Model is shown in Appendix E.

- 3.11 Undoubtedly, contact centres, BCUs and departments work most effectively together where there are effective lines of communication – both formal and informal. Such communications are more straightforward when contact centres are based locally, but they can be achieved with centralised units. The inspection revealed a mixed picture in respect of involvement of contact centre representatives in BCU and departmental meetings. Some 84 per cent of contact management departments have representatives at tactical meetings, but 91 per cent report attending both strategic and operational meetings.
- 3.12 Encouragingly, only one contact centre visited had no representation at relevant force or divisional meetings. Conversely, there are some positive examples of genuine collaborative working. In Hampshire, contact centre staff attend divisional management meetings, and the force has identified liaison officers in each BCU to act as single points of contact with the contact centre. Their primary role is to discuss operational matters, but they also act as a conduit to strategic decision-making.
- 3.13 Although, in most forces, contact centre staff attend relevant meetings, less than half reciprocate and invite BCU representatives to their management meetings. There is little evidence that the results of these interactions are conveyed to all employees.

**SUGGESTION D**

Representatives from BCUs and other departments should be included in appropriate contact centre management meetings in order to help develop a close understanding of each other's requirements, resolve issues of mutual concern and promote a culture of co-ordinated service delivery.

- 3.14 A major step forward in recognising the importance of contact management to core force business would be overt recognition at a national level. It is noticeable that, unlike most core operational functions, such as CID, traffic and firearms, there is no structure of national and regional practitioner meetings within which to debate policy and problems and exchange good practice. While some regions hold meetings for contact centre and/or communications managers, there is no official regional structure nor any dedicated national forum to secure focus and consistency.
- 3.15 Since April 2005, responsibility for call handling and contact management has been added to the existing work streams of the IT Communications sub-committee of ACPO Information Management Business Area (ACPO IMBA). HMIC believes that, while there is an understandable rationale for this move, it will actually reinforce the misconception that contact management is mainly a technology issue and sustain a situation where different elements of the issue are dispersed, with no obvious overview role. While ACPO IMBA has a national and regional meeting structure, the latter almost exclusively involves IT experts from forces. The ACPO structure also discourages involvement of the tripartite partners and risks submerging this vital issue within an already packed portfolio.

### RECOMMENDATION 3

A national tripartite forum should be established to drive the implementation of the NCHS, as enhanced by the findings of this inspection, and provide focus for consolidation and dissemination of good practice, policy and procedures.

- 3.16 The service would also benefit from a central repository for good practice at both strategic and operational levels to help develop policies and procedures. Much good practice has been identified, but often in isolated pockets from which it has not been spread to all forces.

### RECOMMENDATION 4

The tripartite forum should develop a centralised repository for good practice in contact centre management, which should be accessible to all forces and have established processes for ongoing review and update.

- 3.17 Lack of continuity in the tenure of senior managers is a widespread concern. It is common practice for senior police managers, particularly at superintendent rank, to move into and out of contact management within two years. Each new post-holder brings their own ideas and influence on the culture of the centre, and in one case prompted a sceptical enquiry from centre staff asking 'how long will you be staying?'
- 3.18 Few forces acknowledge the specialist nature of contact centre work when choosing senior managers, and consequently there is often a skills and knowledge gap. There is limited evidence of effective succession planning, or a comprehensive induction course for senior police staff to equip them with the necessary skills before taking up their new post.

- 3.19 It is essential that all staff know how their role links and contributes to operational service delivery. Key ways of promoting this shared understanding include team days, structured induction and joint training. Perhaps the most effective method on a daily basis is the use of briefings. The value of pre-duty briefings was highlighted by a number of forces visited. While briefings are primarily used to impart operational information, they can also help in reinforcing culture (see the good practice case study below).

#### GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY: STAFF BRIEFINGS

Kent Police has a well developed system for briefing staff. All core shift are briefed at the start of duty by team leaders, in a purpose-built briefing room. The briefing content is produced centrally using advanced software and includes operational information, performance updates and results of specific incidents or operations. The briefing is also placed on the contact centre's home intranet page and is available throughout the force. Contact centre staff who are not working core shifts use the intranet to self-brief and therefore receive the same information as their core shift colleagues. Trigger plans, specific initiatives and operational orders are also embedded in the STORM (System for Tasking and Operational Resource Management) command and control system and are indicated by pop-up windows, ensuring that all staff have access to current information.

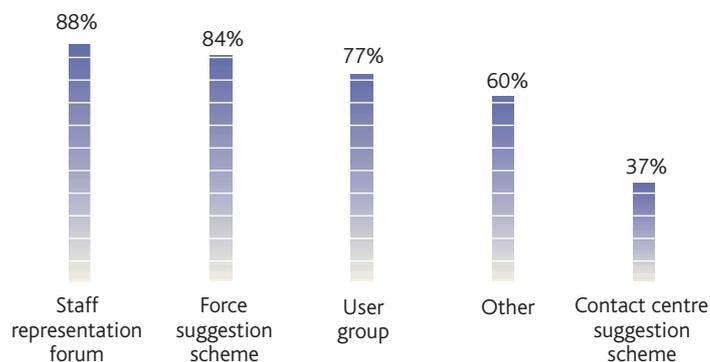
- 3.20 Briefings promote inclusivity, team-building and a clearer understanding of the needs and requirements of other departments or BCUs. Briefings also provide an ideal opportunity for contact centre staff to share in the success of BCUs or departments, with updates on the results of incidents where contact centre staff played a part in a successful conclusion. It is disappointing, therefore, that 40 per cent of police contact centres in the UK do not brief staff before they go on duty.
- 3.21 Research highlights the value to performance and welfare of empowering staff to be fully involved in developing and improving the business processes. In recognition of this, the majority of forces involve their staff in the design of, and provision of facilities in, their workplace. Not enough is done, however, to gauge staff satisfaction through surveys which link directly to service delivery and performance. Some forces do carry out such surveys but then fail to use the results<sup>20</sup>.

#### SUGGESTION E

Forces should ensure that all contact centre staff are briefed at commencement of duty, either in person or by remote media. As well as delivering operational information, the opportunity should be used to convey corporate messages, recognise good work and reinforce the appropriate culture.

<sup>20</sup> *The empowerment of service workers: what, why, how and when*, Sloane Management Review vol. 33, 1992.

**FIGURE 5: THE PERCENTAGE OF FORCES WITH OPPORTUNITIES TO INVOLVE CONTRACT CENTRE STAFF IN DECISION-MAKING**



Source: response to HMIC questionnaire to forces, November 2004

3.22 This mixed picture of staff involvement and empowerment in police contact centres is supported by academic research carried out on behalf of UNISON<sup>21</sup>. Contact centre staff believe they have very little influence in areas that are central to their working lives. The authors identify a 'democratic deficit' in police contact centres, where the degree of responsibility is not matched by any input into decision making (see below).

**EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR INFLUENCE ON MANAGEMENT POLICY**

Policy	No influence (%)	Little influence (%)	Quite a lot/ a great deal (%)
Sort of people recruited	83	11	2.8
Staffing levels	82	13	2.9
Incentive schemes	81	13	2.7
Allocation of jobs to people	70	20	3.7
Appraisal procedure	68	19	3.6
Changes to work practices	58	30	2.8
Shift patterns	59	26	3.9
'Family friendly' policies	56	28	4.7
Overtime allocation	53	23	8.3
Training and development	49	36	4.3
Health and safety	42	36	7.1

Source: *The thin front line: call handling in police control rooms* (Bain, Taylor and Dutton 2005)

<sup>21</sup> *The thin front line: call handling in police control rooms*, Bain, Taylor and Dutton, 2005.

- 3.23 The cause of inclusivity and teamwork is not helped by the functional, and in many cases physical, divide between call-takers, incident dispatchers and switchboard operators. There is evidence of a cultural as well as a functional divide, often reflected in tension between call-takers and dispatchers. Separating call-takers and dispatchers requires a robust management structure and appropriate management style in order to prevent a 'them and us' culture.
- 3.24 In one force visited, staff described a culture where dispatchers shout at call-takers, so call takers were frightened to discuss matters with dispatchers or even talk to them. Staff also described being 'petrified' to make a mistake in grading a call or not getting sufficient information from a caller because of the dispatcher's response. This lowers the morale of staff and affects performance. The length of time call-takers take to complete calls increases to 'up to 20 minutes', incidents are incorrectly graded and the two teams are increasingly divided.
- 3.25 In Gloucestershire, efforts have been made to improve the relationship between call-takers and dispatchers. When designing a new contact centre a conscious decision was taken to co-locate all staff in order to promote a team culture. During shift overlap periods, if all positions are filled in one function, dispatchers will move to call-taking to take calls or call handlers will move to the control room to answer 999 calls. This has resulted in a clearer understanding of everybody's roles and challenges, and a greater appreciation of how each contributes to the overall performance of the force.

**“Brick by brick the wall is coming down. It's much better now we are all in the same building. When we were in different rooms and areas it was very much 'them and us', mainly because we didn't fully understand what each other did.”**

Contact centre staff member

- 3.26 Indicative of the divide between call-takers, dispatchers and other parts of the contact centre is that only 50 per cent of centres provide any joint training for staff, and only 5 of the 16 fieldwork forces visited train contact centre staff and operational police officers together. There are distinct advantages in joint training, particularly in increasing the awareness of each other's roles, requirements and challenges, promoting a culture of inclusivity and harnessing effort towards the same goals.
- 3.27 At a more tactical level, many call handlers and frontline operational staff report conflicting priorities between senior management in BCUs and those in contact centres. Conflict is most evident in the perceived inability of some contact centres to respond to local policing needs, particularly in a failure to be able to adapt the attendance policy to support specific local initiatives. This was cited as a significant impairment to the delivery of a joined-up, quality service. To overcome this difficulty there need to be clear lines of communication between BCUs, departments and the contact centre. Centralisation of contact management is sometimes unfairly blamed for a force's poor or deteriorating customer satisfaction level, whereas dissatisfaction is as likely to be caused by poor operational response as by poor call handling.

#### **SUGGESTION F**

**Forces should pursue joint training for contact centre staff with operational officers, in order to promote understanding and awareness of each other's roles and an appreciation of how each contributes to force performance.**

- 3.28 These tensions can be addressed by promoting a greater understanding of each other's needs and articulating a clear, shared objective. It also helps to be clear about the purpose of the contact centre: is it merely a call handling function or is there an element of command and control? If the latter, do BCUs or the contact centre have primacy? (See the good practice case study below.)

### GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY: BCU ACCOUNTABILITY

In two forces visited, buy-in to a centralised contact centre at senior management level in BCUs was limited, and the lack of support to contact centres resulted in a high level of open incidents on command and control systems. This affected the quality of service provided to users.

In one force, the chief officer lead was putting in place a system whereby BCU commanders who “do not see themselves as internal customers” will be held accountable for the performance of contact management relating specifically to their area. A performance framework will be put in place to achieve this. The benefits of adopting this process are:

- a focused approach to contact centre management;
- a reduction in the numbers of open incidents; and
- increased customer satisfaction.

### CONCLUSION

- 3.29 The right business or operating culture is a key driver to improving performance and service delivery. Its impact can be felt throughout the work of the contact centre. A culture whereby staff are valued and supported within a framework of accountability, where the customer comes first, and where performance management and measurement are embedded will deliver better results. Staff need to be more closely involved in shaping the service they deliver, through structured internal surveys and consultation.
- 3.30 To achieve the required step-change in contact management quality, chief officers must overtly recognise the function's importance and install it as a core priority. At force level it must be integrated into NIM business structures. Nationally, it deserves a higher profile and requires a national forum to focus progress.

## 4. Effective strategy and structures



## 4. Effective strategy and structures

### INTRODUCTION

- 4.1 Earlier chapters discussed the context within which contact centres operate and the organisational culture that informs decision-making. But forces also need the right strategy and effective supporting structures to translate the plan into decisive action. This chapter covers the *what* and *how* of turning vision and theory into practical delivery.
- 4.2 A contact centre's strategy is the detail of *what* the contact centre aims to achieve and *how* it is going to achieve it. The structure, in this context, is both how each organisation structures its call handling facilities and how the contact centre operates on a day-to-day basis.
- 4.3 One prerequisite, therefore, is a clear vision of *why* any organisation has a contact centre supported by an equally clear definition of its function and goals.

### WHAT SHOULD 'GOOD' PERFORMANCE LOOK LIKE?

- 4.4 At the most basic level, a contact centre needs a strategy to ensure focus and direction, encompassing:

#### strategy:

- a *clear vision and strategic objectives, customer-focused and with clear links to national, force and BCU/departmental strategies;*
- policies, procedures and a programme of action to deliver the strategy;
- a process of analysis and evaluation to measure the success of the strategy;
- means of communicating the strategy and associated policies inside the function, throughout the force and to external stakeholders;
- *empowerment of employees to participate in service delivery and decision making;* and
- *business continuity and disaster recovery plans which are regularly reviewed and tested.*

#### structure:

- a cost-effective and flexible departmental structure that meets the business needs, encourages collaborative working and achieves optimum customer and staff satisfaction.

(Note: The elements above highlighted in bold italics represent issues already included, either in full or in part, in the NCHS.)

**WHAT IS COMMERCIAL GOOD PRACTICE?**

- 4.5 There is no universally accepted definition of a contact centre. Some comprise only call handling while others include other business functions, making an all-encompassing definition difficult to achieve. The Department of Trade and Industry has defined a call centre as an organisation where:

**“ten or more people work exclusively or for the majority of their time in a structured telephony environment (which may also involve electronic means of customer management), including either inbound or outbound operations.”<sup>22</sup>**

- 4.6 This, however, fails to recognise the move towards employing other methods to enable customers to access their service, such as email and text, and consequently the term 'contact centre' is gradually replacing 'call centre'. 'Contact centre' is used throughout this report unless it specifically refers to an organisation that relies on a telephone system, when 'call centre' will be used.
- 4.7 More important than having a precise definition of a centre is having a clear vision of exactly what the organisation is trying to achieve and how the contact centre and its staff contribute to its overall objectives (see the good practice case study below).

**GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY: STRATEGIC VISION**

Stream International's vision statement is:

**“Delivering exceptional customer experiences.”**

This vision is displayed throughout Stream's offices and on corporate literature. All strategies are explicitly linked to the vision, which directs staff's day-to-day business through effective processes which recognise that customer satisfaction is key to a successful business. Performance information is relayed to all staff on a regular basis, and staff are encouraged to contribute to the continual development and improvement of the service through suggestion schemes which can attract a reward.

**Strategy**

- 4.8 The strategy has to be more than a document, it has to convey the central purpose and direction of travel of the organisation and enthuse and involve the workforce in achieving excellence in service delivery. A strategy is thus only as good as the actions that emerge and the achievements that follow. Policies and processes are needed to operationalise this strategy, and they should contain the targets and measures which will enable success to be evaluated and the results to be fed back into service improvement. Each member of staff should know how they are able to help the centre achieve its goals and be clear about when targets have been met. The strategy and policies must also be communicated throughout the organisation and, where appropriate, to external customers to clarify the contact centre's purpose, remit and relevant operating procedures.

<sup>22</sup> The Department of Trade and Industry, *The UK contact centre industry: a study*, 2004 (see [www.dti.gov.uk/ewt/contactind.pdf](http://www.dti.gov.uk/ewt/contactind.pdf)).

- 4.9 The contact management strategy should recognise the importance of involving staff in shaping the call handling function. A regular and effective two-way process should exist, using feedback to develop service delivery and place staff involvement at the centre of organisational thinking and strategic development. Frontline staff are often best placed to pinpoint problems and identify ways in which these can be addressed.
- 4.10 The strategy should include business continuity and disaster recovery plans which recognise the contact centre is a critical part of overall service delivery. A business continuity plan determines how an organisation will resume partially or completely interrupted critical functions within a predetermined time after a disaster or disruption. Disaster recovery is the process of restoring an operation after an interruption of service, including equipment repair and/or replacement, file recovery and/or restoration and resumption of service to users.
- 4.11 Within contact centres, robust plans should be in place and regularly tested, to cope with potential scenarios ranging from a sudden increase in demand through to a complete loss of call centre functionality to ensure that service to customers can be maintained (see the good practice case study below).

### GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY: BUSINESS CONTINUITY

The tsunami disaster which so badly affected South East Asia in December 2004 had a profound impact on the travel industry. Thomas Cook Signature had almost 1000 customers abroad at the time of the disaster and put into effect well-rehearsed emergency plans to deal with the expected increase in calls. In the immediate aftermath of the disaster, its contact centre dealt with an exceptional number of calls, ranging from cancelled bookings to concern for missing relatives. The contact centre was able to respond to the increased demand by initiating a silver command and call centre incident team. Staff are trained in different disciplines, including overall management of the incident and dealing with issues including repatriation of the deceased, assisting families to travel to resorts to see their injured relatives and handling distressed and upset customers. These plans are tested at least twice each year, including a multi-team cross-business exercise, and any 'live' incident is thoroughly de-briefed with contingency plans being reviewed in light of any feedback.

### Structure

- 4.12 Strategic direction and political considerations will influence the structure of a contact management function, which must complement the business of the organisation and be able to meet the demands of both external and internal customers. There are numerous options for contact centre structures, ranging from a single-site multi-functional centre, to 'virtual' sites where a number of centres are connected electronically to function as one, but with the ability to provide a service at a local level and to numerous locally based, stand-alone sites.
- 4.13 Business practices in the commercial world in recent years have tended towards large, centralised call handling centres, driven mainly by a desire for efficiency and minimised costs. As a further extension, and recognising opportunities for still greater savings, many companies have outsourced their contact management function.

Signs are emerging that commercial companies are beginning to reconsider their call handling structures. Some have recognised the problems associated with large call centres and the public perception of a 'faceless monster' and are moving to more localised service provision. Indeed, several banks have recently changed their strategy and extensively advertised the fact that customers can once again contact their local bank rather than being dealt with by a centralised call centre.

- 4.14 In the effort to be ever more efficient, organisations have placed customer service and quality second to perceived cost-effectiveness, with the result that customers have taken their business elsewhere. Providing a 'local' and personalised service, while costing more in terms of staff and facilities in the short term, may prove to be a wise investment, with increased customer satisfaction and 'profit' that outweighs the additional cost.

### HOW GOOD IS CURRENT POLICE PERFORMANCE?

#### Strategy

- 4.15 Currently, there is no national call handling or contact management strategy for the police service. In 2001, the Home Office called for a national call handling strategy to support the introduction of a single non-emergency telephone number. Due largely to a change in strategic direction and a delay in progressing a national non-emergency number, a strategy was not developed. In the same year, HMIC's thematic inspection report<sup>23</sup> expressed disappointment at the lack of a national strategy and emphasised the need for its production together with specific milestones for implementation and agreed timescales. Although the NCHS published in April 2005 reiterated the need for a strategy, there is still no process for its production.
- 4.16 The introduction of a national strategy that directs all police contact management would provide a shared vision of the purpose of contact management and a standardisation of the quality of service provided to callers wherever they live. It would facilitate closer working relationships between force contact centres which would help tackle cross-border (Level 2) criminality and provide a platform to support any reorganisation of force boundaries. It would also support the National Policing Plan and in particular the drive for a more citizen-focused service.

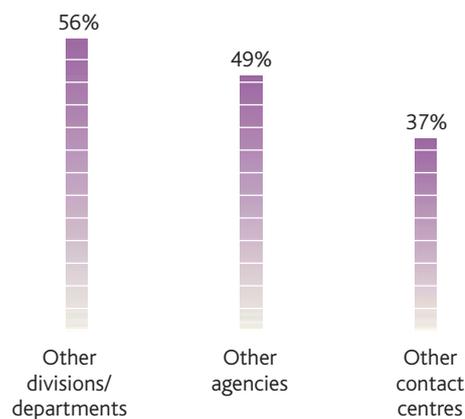
#### RECOMMENDATION 5

ACPO and APA should jointly develop a national contact management strategy with agreed milestones for implementation timescales. This strategy should provide the framework for the implementation of the National Call Handling Standards, as enhanced by the findings of this inspection.

<sup>23</sup> *Open all hours: a thematic inspection report on the role of police visibility and accessibility in public reassurance*, HMIC (2001).

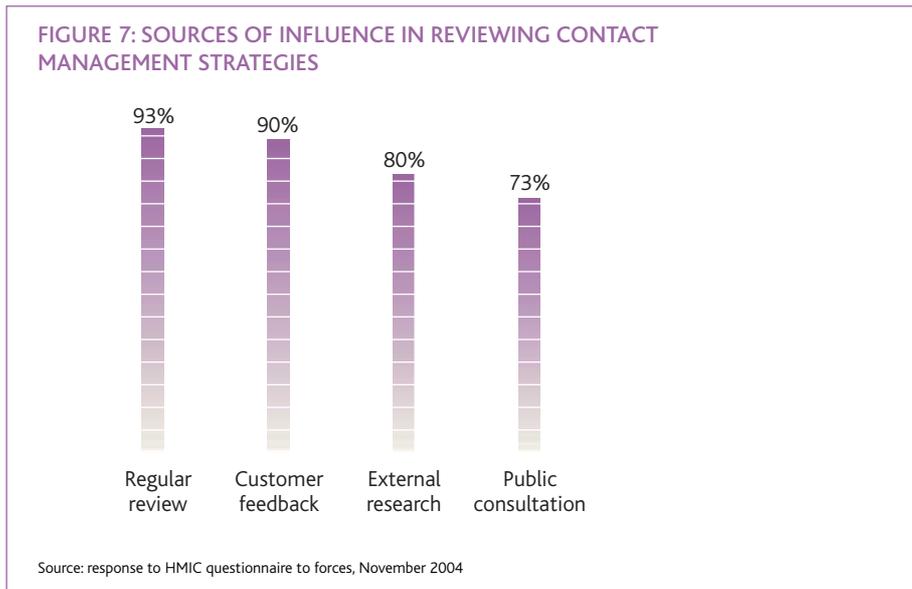
- 4.17** Only 70 per cent of forces have a call handling or contact management strategy. These range from a one-page document, which simply states the purpose of the function, to some over 50 pages long, where targets and measures are included alongside strategic focus, service level agreements and specific policies for changing the tapes in the centre's CCTV system. Although there is no template for a strategy, the former cannot focus the efforts of the contact management staff, while the latter mix operational, tactical and strategic issues and thus confuse. Whatever the quality of existing strategies, however, it is of considerable concern that 30 per cent of forces do not even have one.
- 4.18** Some forces have appropriate contact management strategies, but they may fail to deliver them unless there are well-defined policies, supported by a robust plan which transforms vision into service delivery. While all the forces visited by the inspection team had documented policies in relation to contact management, several did not have plans which related these policies to the strategy, and they were unable to demonstrate a rationale as to how their policies and procedures had developed. A frequent explanation for this was that the policies had evolved over time, with little attempt to integrate them with BCU or departmental working practices. In essence, the contact management function was operating as a stand-alone entity and its importance to the overall service delivery of the force was not recognised.
- 4.19** Some forces have service level agreements (SLAs) between their contact management function and others (Figure 6). While SLAs are not always appropriate, the fact that only 56 per cent of forces have agreements with other divisions or departments indicates a lack of a joined-up approach to service delivery.

**FIGURE 6: THE PERCENTAGE OF CONTACT MANAGEMENT CENTRES THAT HAVE SLAs**



Source: response to HMIC questionnaire to forces, November 2004

- 4.20** Where strategies are in place they need to be reviewed regularly, taking into account a range of influences (Figure 7).



- 4.21** Every force needs clear strategies and supporting policies, but absolutely key to the success of a good contact centre is the personal support of chief officers. The importance of such support has been well evidenced in successive Baseline Assessments, where the most successful forces have active and enthusiastic chief officer involvement. This championing emphasises the importance of the function and its contribution towards wider force performance.

#### RECOMMENDATION 6

All forces should have a contact management strategy which complements the national strategy, includes appropriate objectives and action plans which are regularly reviewed, and is championed by a nominated chief officer.

- 4.22** Even in forces where a strategy currently exists, the strategy is not always clearly communicated, and this can have an adverse effect on performance. In one force, the business case for a new contact management structure was not written until two years after a new centre had been built. There is no contact management strategy, and working practices and procedures evolved without consultation with BCUs or other departments. This has led to friction between the department and BCUs due to a lack of understanding of the role of contact management and uncertainty about operational procedures. The force has consistently failed to meet many of its contact management targets.
- 4.23** In contrast, Surrey Police promotes its call handling strategy widely, has regular meetings with colleagues from throughout the force and regularly reviews policies and procedures to ensure that they are delivering the required level of service and supporting operational service delivery.

- 4.24 Successful forces have identified that an important element of a contact management strategy is a structured plan to communicate with staff and to involve them in the development of the service they provide. It is also clear that communication with the public and partners is equally important to managing expectations and demands (see the good practice case study below).

### GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY: COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC AND PARTNERS

The Contact Management Department in Gloucestershire produces a monthly departmental information sheet, which includes details of call handling performance and discusses any issues which have arisen. This is distributed widely throughout the force and is designed to be used at public meetings, such as local consultation forums, where officers can update the community and partners on performance and any specific issues.

### RECOMMENDATION 7

All forces should actively communicate the policies and practices underpinning the contact management strategy to staff to jointly improve service delivery, and to partners and the public to raise awareness and help manage expectation and demand.

- 4.25 Once strategies and policies are in place and staff and stakeholders fully engaged, there can be no excuse for allowing such a critical service to fail. Despite the importance of maintaining service delivery in a crisis, some forces have no plans to ensure business continuity or disaster recovery – 88 per cent have a business continuity plan, 86 per cent have a disaster recovery plan, and 81 per cent have both. So up to one force in five is vulnerable in the event of a serious malfunction, with potentially very damaging consequences for service users.
- 4.26 Clearly this weakness should be addressed as a matter of urgency and, in line with current practice in the commercial world, plans should be in place and tested on a regular basis to minimise risk of loss of service. It is important to recognise, however, that testing itself brings some risk, and managers need to balance the frequency of testing against the business need. In the ever-changing policing environment, tests should be at least on an annual basis, but review should be a continual process.
- 4.27 Impact on business continuity can manifest itself in a variety of different forms, including loss of technology, electricity, fire, flood, strike or even a viral epidemic. (See the good practice case study overleaf.)

**GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY: BUSINESS CONTINUITY FOR STRIKE ACTION**

On 25 August 2005 police communication centres in Scotland experienced a 24-hour industrial strike, by members of UNISON, over pay and conditions. Forces implemented contingency plans to ensure a continuity of service. In many areas this resulted in police officers being drafted into the function.

The effects of the strike action varied throughout Scotland and, although they ranged from a single member of staff going on strike in one force to 32 members in another, plans were made to cater for a full walkout. Due in parts to the limited action taken on this occasion, service levels were maintained.

- 4.28 Although some forces have incorporated a 'no strike clause' within contracts of employment, the uncertainty and extent of any future industrial action requires forces to ensure that business and contingency planning take cognisance of this issue.

**RECOMMENDATION 8**

All forces should take immediate action to ensure that comprehensive business continuity and disaster recovery plans are in place to enable service delivery of the contact management function to be maintained at all times. These plans should be tested annually and kept under constant review.

**Structure**

- 4.29 As in the commercial sector, police forces have tended to centralise control room and contact management operations, often following a Best Value review where comparison has been made with the private sector. Many BCU-level control rooms have given way to larger, centralised contact centres, either on single sites or arranged as 'virtual' contact centres. This has been partly in response to a perceived need for greater co-ordination within and between forces, partly for financial savings through economies of scale (for example in technology or training) but also to meet the challenge of increasing expectation around improved performance.
- 4.30 In the context of largely autonomous individual forces, the national picture is a patchwork of various combinations and permutations of the structural options. Questionnaire returns and research work carried out by the Home Office illustrate this diversity in the following areas:

**Location/ownership**

- 33 out of 43 forces in England and Wales have centralised their function either through geographic location or virtual operation.

**Switchboard**

- 74 per cent of forces have a switchboard, and in all but one only non-emergency calls are received via the switchboard – 999 calls are routed directly to call-takers.
- There is a growing tendency for switchboard operators to 'triage' calls prior to transfer to a call handling unit.
- In several forces, switchboard operators also ask further questions about the crime or incident and decide whether to transfer incident-related calls to a call handler or crime desk, depending on the need for a police response. They will also transfer urgent calls which are reported on non-emergency lines to emergency call handlers.

### Call takers and dispatchers

- All forces have split the call handling and dispatching functions, although three forces admit dispatchers will occasionally answer 999 calls 'if they are not busy'.
- In 61 per cent of forces 999 call handling is separated from other call handling. This is often done by basing 999 call takers in a different location, often in control rooms with dispatchers.
- 26 per cent of forces report having a 'one stop shop' strategy, whereby all calls are answered by a call taker who attempts to resolve the call without transferring the caller.

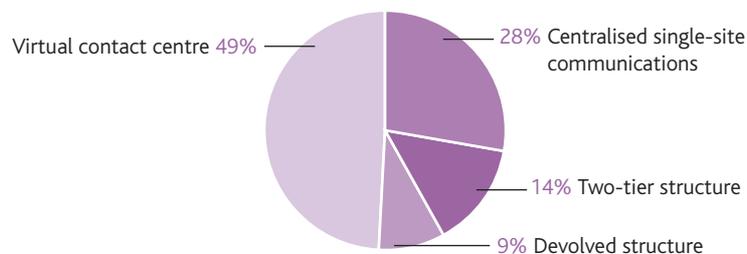
### Crime recording

- 65 per cent of forces have a crime desk for recording crimes and creating crime reports. In over half of these forces the crime desk is part of the contact management department. In the remainder it is either devolved to local areas or centrally located as part of another department.
- Four forces (nine per cent of forces) are in the process of introducing a crime desk.
- The remaining 26 per cent of forces do not have a crime desk. The majority of these forces use multi-skilled call handlers who complete an electronic crime report when they receive a crime-related call.

### Help desks

- The majority of forces have a help desk or incident management unit to deal with lengthy enquiries or to attempt to resolve calls rather than resource them.

FIGURE 8: STRUCTURES OF POLICE CONTACT FUNCTIONS



- 4.31 A variety of different structural options are deployed across the United Kingdom, but no firm conclusion has been reached as to which one structure is most effective. This is reflected in the fact that in Baseline Assessment 2004/05 the three forces graded as *Excellent* are Kent (single site, centrally managed), Hampshire (two sites, centrally managed) and West Midlands (over 20 sites with a mixture of central and local management).

**4.32** From all the structures examined, four main models of police contact management have been identified; they are described more fully in Appendix D. Within each are a number of permutations, often influenced by strategic considerations such as whether call handlers should deal with all calls, in a one-stop shop approach, or whether crime recording calls should be dealt with by a separate specialist unit. While the baseline assessment figures relate specifically to England and Wales, a similar picture is apparent in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Although not definitive because of the myriad of possible combinations, four main models are evident.

#### **Model 1: force-level centralised contact centre on a single site**

- 4.33** Call-takers located at a centralised contact centre receive both 999 and non-emergency calls from anywhere in the force area. Operational decisions on call grading, resource allocation and dispatch are made within the centre. The function is managed centrally and associated policy decided at force level.
- 4.34** In order to be successful, this structure requires especially clear agreements and policies with BCUs and departments and a robust communications strategy to ensure staff throughout the force are aware of the remit and operating procedures of the contact centre. There is also the need to provide additional fallback facilities for business continuity. Potential advantages of this structure include:
- a corporate approach;
  - standardised practices;
  - economies of scale;
  - enhanced supervision, with all staff at one site; and
  - support of Level 2 cross-BCU boundary work.

Potential disadvantages include:

- lack of direct control for BCU commanders;
  - lack of promotion of local solutions to local problems;
  - perception of 'mass production' call centre environment;
  - loss of some local knowledge; and
  - decreased business continuity capacity.
- 4.35** Of the 12 forces (28 per cent) that have centralised single-site communications, 10 route non-emergency calls through a switchboard, with 999 calls coming straight through to a call-taker. One example is Lincolnshire Police's Force Communications and Control Centre (FCCC), based at force headquarters with its own management structure. Call-takers and dispatchers are co-located in a single building, together with switchboard operators. The crime recording bureau is separately located and is not part of the communications department.

#### **Model 2: two-tier structure**

- 4.36** With this model, calls are received at both force and area level. Usually, 999 calls are received and dealt with locally and non-emergency calls are dealt with at force level. Management of the force-level service is usually by a centralised department, while locally based staff are managed by BCUs.

**4.37** Critical to the success of this model is the need for clarity of responsibility at both operational and managerial level and the facility to transfer urgent calls received on non-emergency lines to emergency call handlers based on BCUs. Potential advantages of this structure include:

- increased control and accountability for BCU commanders;
- ability to respond to local demands; and
- promotion of business continuity.

Potential disadvantages include:

- lack of corporacy;
- reduced clarity of responsibility for the complete management of a call for service;
- creation of a cultural divide between non-emergency call-takers and other staff; and
- reduced ability to share 999 call handling demand.

**4.38** A two-tier system is in place in six forces (14 per cent). In four of these, 999 calls are received at area level and non-emergency calls centrally, with two forces receiving non-emergency calls locally and emergency calls centrally.

**4.39** Merseyside Police is in the process of moving to a similar model. Non-emergency call handling will be delivered by a centralised department with its own management structure, and emergency call handling and dispatch will be devolved to and managed by BCUs, the rationale being to make divisional commanders accountable for the dispatch and control of their resources.

### Model 3: devolved contact centres

**4.40** This model has several sites, usually under BCU management, and is intended to deliver a local call handling service. Both 999 and non-emergency calls are handled at a local level, with calls either being directed straight to each centre or routed there via a switchboard. Call-takers deal with calls from only one particular force area or occasionally a cluster of areas, and are often located at an area station.

**4.41** Critical to the success of this model are structures which identify good practice and share it between the centres and processes which ensure cross-BCU and Level 2 incidents are effectively handled. Potential advantages include:

- public support for 'local' call handling and response;
- BCU ownership of the whole process;
- retention of 'local' knowledge; and
- promotion of business continuity.

Potential disadvantages include:

- lack of corporacy;
- lack of ready support for cross-BCU working;
- parochialism; and
- inequitable workload between centres.

- 4.42 Four forces (nine per cent) have a devolved structure. Of these, three have a switchboard through which non-emergency calls are routed. Lancashire Constabulary has six BCU-based combined contact and deployment centres. Line management is through BCUs, but a central call management unit oversees activity. The rationale is to deliver local call handling solutions. However, the sites are connected electronically to act as a 'virtual' single site to cope with periods of high demand.

#### Model 4: 'virtual' contact centre with multiple sites

- 4.43 Under this model, a number of contact centres are linked electronically to enable both 999 and non-emergency calls from anywhere in the force area to be answered by a 'virtual' single site. In some forces 999 call-taking is co-located with a centralised dispatch function. Contact centres and the dispatch functions are predominantly managed by a centralised communications department.
- 4.44 To be successful, this structure requires clearly defined working practices for BCUs and a robust management and supervisory structure to ensure all sites operate in a corporate manner. Potential advantages include:
- increase of business continuity;
  - sharing of demand between sites; and
  - a single managerial structure for the whole function.

Potential disadvantages include:

- increased overheads compared to a single site;
  - decreased supervision, or increased costs to supervise multiple sites; and
  - lack of support for joint agency call handling.
- 4.45 Some 21 forces (49 per cent) report having virtual contact centres, though there are wide variances in the number of sites (from 2 to over 20) and the way these are linked to the dispatch or incident management function. One force using such a structure is North Yorkshire, which currently has two sites that both house dispatchers and call-takers. Both sites take calls for the whole of the force, which uses a single non-emergency number, and they are linked as a 'virtual' contact centre. A 'one stop shop' strategy was in place, in which call-takers provided the first interaction with callers and recorded crime reports. It was found that crime calls were blocking the system. Therefore, a switchboard was introduced to filter calls, and a crime recording bureau (CRB) set up to record crimes and take calls from officers updating crimes. Quantifiable performance has improved, from an average of 65 per cent of non-emergency calls and 70 per cent of 999 calls answered within target under the previous structure, to 90 per cent and 92 per cent respectively following the introduction of a switchboard and CRB. The force's Baseline Assessment grading has improved from Fair in 2003/04 to Good in 2004/05.
- 4.46 Although a perceived disadvantage of centralised control rooms is the loss of community-based services and, perhaps, local knowledge, technology in the shape of closed circuit television (CCTV) and Global Positioning System (GPS) mapping should arguably overcome these difficulties. The AIRWAVE digital trunked radio system has been a driver for centralisation, and the Netherlands version of AIRWAVE is the basis for a restructured emergency services response based on coterminous geographical areas.

### Other issues of centralisation

- 4.47 Centralisation of contact management facilities is strategically attractive but has not received universal support from staff involved in delivering the service. Call centre work can be intensive, pressurised and stressful, especially when call throughput is prioritised and breaks are minimised. Where quantitative measures are used to drive performance, call handlers have less control and discretion and this can erode employees' wellbeing. Consequently, evidence suggests that call centre work is associated with high levels of sickness absence and staff turnover.
- 4.48 Following their research, the authors of the UNISON-sponsored research into police call handling conclude that:

**“In police control rooms the shift to centralised control room call centres, in the context of tight financial restrictions and lean staffing, has brought about a degradation of work, and widespread pressure, stress and ill-health amongst its highly-committed workforce.”** *The thin front line: call handling in police control rooms* (Bain, Taylor and Dutton 2005)

**“From working in a police station where I answered calls and knew how long it would be before an officer attended, I now work in a call centre environment where the aim is for the switchboard to answer within so many seconds. Then a call taker answers in so many seconds. Then the incident goes to a queue till an officer is free to go. Jobs are prioritised so it is not uncommon for a caller to be waiting 24 or 48 hours (or longer) for an officer to attend. Ringing a caller back for the sixth or seventh time to apologise that no one has attended, while trying to deal with an active queue of 40 plus incidents leads to stress.”**

Communications operator, male, aged 57, 20 years service

- 4.49 But the source of such problems is most likely to reside not in the structure of a centralised communications function but in management, supervision, resourcing and dominant policies and practices. Consequently, forces should not avoid centralising their communications function if this is the most suitable business model for them. But they must implement the good practice identified in this report regarding strategy, human resources and demand management. The central repository of good practice (see Recommendation 4) should include specific information on structural options, advantages and benefits. This should be accessible to all forces and subject to ongoing review and update.

**CONCLUSION**

- 4.50** Without a contact management strategy, forces face the risk of developing a service which sits aside from the rest of the organisation, with no clear direction and little integration with operational service delivery. The strategy should define what the contact centre aims to achieve and how it will do it, and it should be clearly communicated throughout the force. Any strategy is only as good as the plans and policies that turn the vision into reality: without them it might as well sit on the shelf gathering dust. These policies and procedures should be developed in consultation with partners to ensure they reflect the business of the centre and ensure that NIM principles are embedded at the heart of service delivery.
- 4.51** Contact management strategies should reflect the culture and business of the force as a whole and should, therefore, reflect the national direction of policing. A national strategy for police contact management would focus the whole service on the importance of this function to the whole business of policing. With chief officer support and integration with the NCHS, this would ensure that the good practice identified locally is spread throughout England and Wales.
- 4.52** Strategy will have a large impact on the structure of contact management. No ideal structure has been identified: each of the four main models has advantages and disadvantages. If properly managed, resourced and supported, any of the structures can be developed to provide a successful contact management function.



## 5. Making the most of our people



## 5. Making the most of our people

### INTRODUCTION

- 5.1 The essence of police contact centre work is the personal interaction between call handlers and members of the public, who are often calling about stressful circumstances. The quality of staff – and their training and supervision – is paramount. This chapter examines people management, paying particular attention to recruitment, retention, absence management, staff turnover, exit interviewing, personal development of staff and pay and conditions.
- 5.2 Good human resource (HR) practices should reinforce the importance of valuing staff. In order that staff can value and meet the needs of callers such practices include sophisticated recruitment and training to build a skilled workforce; job security and good terms and conditions to cultivate employee commitment; and empowerment so that staff can exercise discretion and build a positive relationship with customers. Traditional practice in commercial contact centres is to minimise staff involvement in decision-making and use cheaper, unskilled labour with minimal discretion on the job, which in turn permits low-cost HR management practices.
- 5.3 The complex and highly discretionary nature of police contact management necessitates a 'high involvement by HR professionals' approach to HR management. A clear and well structured HR operation, with good people management, an understanding of the operating context and support for appropriate operational requirements should underpin forces' approach.

### WHAT SHOULD 'GOOD' PERFORMANCE LOOK LIKE?

- 5.4 Good HR performance requires forces to adopt people development practices that:
- ***create a human resource strategy which recognises the needs of contact centre operations;***
  - have a dedicated HR function specific to the contact centre;
  - ***employ an effective and legally compliant HR policy, including recruitment;***
  - ***ensure that the right number of skilled staff and supervisors are working at the right time by matching resources to incoming demand;***
  - ***use well documented career structures and forecast staff career progression and developmental needs;***
  - ***put in place personal performance development plans for all staff;***
  - link the results of staff surveys to performance, attendance management, sickness, staff retention, turnover rates and customer satisfaction;
  - carry out exit interviews to understand why staff leave and use the information to improve conditions; and
  - ensure pay and conditions of service reflect the complexity and importance of the role.

(Note: The elements highlighted above in bold italics represent issues already included, in full or in part, in the NCHS.)

**WHAT IS COMMERCIAL GOOD PRACTICE?**

- 5.5 An HR strategy and plan should define how an organisation will achieve its HR objectives and should be aligned to the needs of the contact centre. It must address how it will manage its people in that environment. There is no 'one size fits all' approach – specific needs and context will dictate approaches.
  
- 5.6 The commercial sector has now recognised that substantial investment is required to deliver an effective HR strategy. It is important to have dedicated human resource units that include resource planners and analysts – specialist roles that play an important part within operational management of the centre. Recent HR theory has emphasised the importance of work-life balance and the adoption of family-friendly policies. Specialist HR advisors are an effective means of ensuring that a business benefits from employees' work-life balance.
  
- 5.7 Ensuring that the right number of skilled staff, supervisors and managers are on duty at the right time is a critical area of concern for contact centres and requires the optimal model for resource deployment. To maintain a good staffing model, the HR strategy should have an effective recruitment process and a clear policy on staff retention, training, development and absence management. The contact centre needs a robust succession plan to ensure that the resource model is maintained.
  
- 5.8 Employee relationship management is increasingly recognised as key to good customer service (see the good practice case study below). Having a structured career progression path and development plan will make staff feel empowered to make decisions and have control over day-to-day situations. Organisations need to ensure that staff satisfaction is measured and feedback used to improve the relationship between the organisation, staff key stakeholders and the customer.

**GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY: CAREER PROGRESSION AND RECOGNITION**

Stream International puts quality at the heart of its operations. To achieve this, it has invested in people through a creative career structure, based on progression in the organisation through personal development reviews and specific developmental training. It also has a rewards and recognition scheme which identifies staff who have provided exceptional customer service and rewards them with payments up to £2,000. The outcome is that the company won the European Call Centre of the Year award in 2002 and 2003.

- 5.9 Staff developmental needs, encompassed in personal development reviews (PDRs), are of paramount importance, as they provide a powerful and flexible way to link an individual's professional and personal development with that of the organisation. PDRs are an effective way to embrace staff long-term development, rather than short-term training needs, and provide them with clear standards and expectations.
  
- 5.10 Employee opinion surveys – giving feedback from the front line – play a vital role in helping an organisation to meet its goals. The principal goal of most outward-facing organisations is to improve the service they offer to their customers. In the commercial world, this helps a company to increase the market share and return to shareholders, improve customer satisfaction, raise productivity and lower costs.

### 5.11 Surveys can help to identify:

- how to increase staff involvement, commitment and loyalty;
- actions required to combat the effects of poor performance, attendance and staff turnover;
- employees' collective knowledge and experience of the organisation and the needs and attitudes of customers;
- internal or external trends which may affect the organisation;
- likely problem areas in the future;
- areas for change;
- training needs;
- staff morale; and
- potential solutions to operational problems.



5.12 It is essential that the actions emanating from the results of surveys are fed back to staff at the earliest opportunity. Participants will feel their contribution has been worthwhile and valued, and are more likely to remain engaged.

5.13 Traditionally, exit interviews are conducted with staff as they leave an organisation, to secure feedback on reasons for leaving and aspects of the work experience that could be improved. Exit interviews are one of the most widely used methods of gathering staff feedback. More recently, the concept of exit interviewing has been developed to capture ideas to improve the job itself. Specific benefits are that:

- vital knowledge is not lost when people leave;
- the learning curve of new people joining is shortened;
- interviewees leave with a more positive view of the organisation;
- patterns and trends in reasons for leaving are identified;
- potential areas of concern are indicated; and
- areas of good or best practice which had previously not been captured are identified.

5.14 The main reasons given by staff for leaving or wanting to leave commercial contact centre employment have changed very little in the last few years. Almost 50 per cent of those surveyed in an IDS survey in 2001<sup>24</sup> identified the intensity of the contact centre environment as a major influence on staff turnover. However, the 'buzz' and vibrancy of the contact centre atmosphere is also highlighted as one of the main features staff like about their work.

5.15 In the same survey poor rates of pay feature as a close second in causing people to leave contact centre employment. This is hardly surprising when the average annual wage for a contact centre agent is £13,450, compared to the national average earnings of £22,484. Interestingly, in the public sector, staff turnover has actually fallen from 17.2 per cent to 14 per cent, well below the industry average of 27 per cent. At the same time, public sector organisations pay among the highest wages: £15,400 per annum. They also have a good record of introducing family-friendly policies and flexible working practices, including job-share and training opportunities.

<sup>24</sup> *Pay and Conditions in Call Centres* – Incomes Data Services (2001).

**HOW GOOD IS CURRENT POLICE PERFORMANCE?**

- 5.16 HR managers in policing have to confront significant challenges, including different regulations for police officers and police staff, fixed shift patterns, local policy around restricted duties and the ever-increasing intensity of work within the contact centre environment. These factors tend not to apply in totality to private sector contact centres.
- 5.17 Some 84 per cent of forces have an HR strategy. However, many of the forces visited did not have a specific contact centre HR strategy linked to the force strategy. Few forces have an HR function dedicated to the contact centre; most share this with three or four other departments. (See the case study below.)

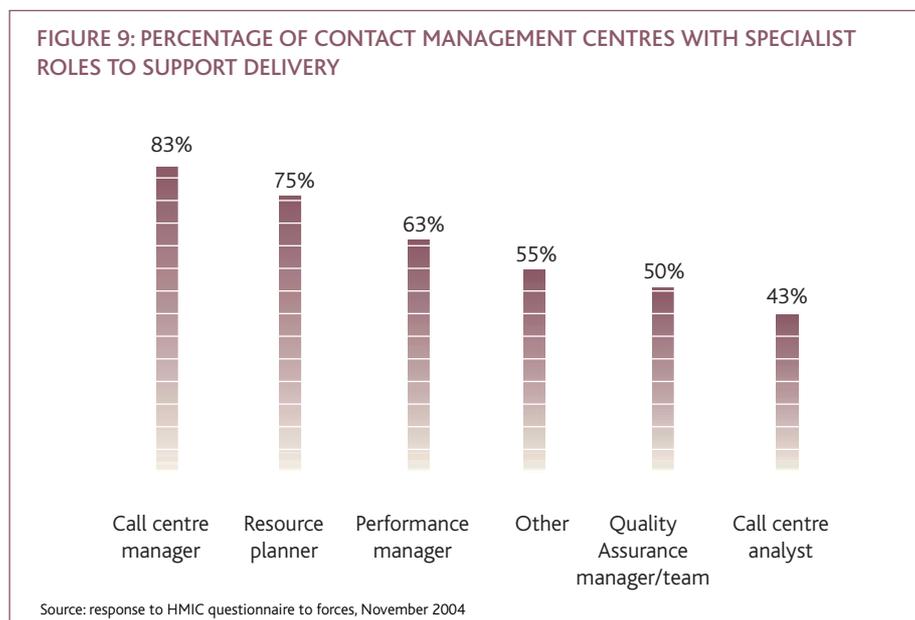
**CASE STUDY: HUMAN RESOURCE STRATEGY**

One force visited had a clear strategic HR blueprint which incorporated organisational needs, resourcing, performance development, rewards and recognition and relations to staff. The strategy was intended to support the establishment of a new contact centre, but as project timescales became tight, HR became a lower priority, resulting in a number of problems such as staff morale, high sickness rates and reduced service levels. In addition, recruiting levels did not keep pace with those leaving the organisation, and training provision was low.

**RECOMMENDATION 9**

All forces should have a specific HR strategy for contact management that encourages a high level of involvement from HR specialists and incorporates the key issues that drive operational performance – effective resource planning to demand, a staff retention policy, succession planning and recruitment.

- 5.18 Some force contact centres have more staff than individual BCUs or the divisions they serve. The majority of BCUs have a dedicated HR function, including analysis and resource planning, but this is often not the case for contact centres (Figure 9). However other specialist roles were found to exist.



### SUGGESTION G

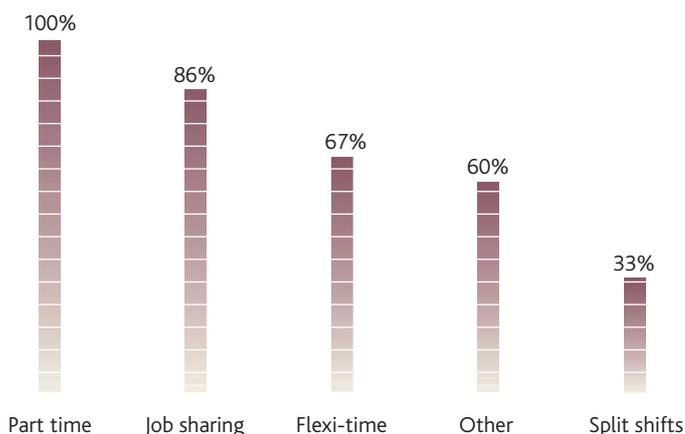
All forces should treat business planning and forecasting as important for contact centre service delivery. Contact management centres should be provided with similar support to BCUs of equivalent size in respect of specialist roles such as dedicated human resource planners, analysts, and performance and quality assurance managers.

### SUGGESTION H

Good workforce planning linked to effective demand management supported by timely recruitment must be in place to avoid operating under authorised staffing levels and recruiting at peak demand or leave times.

- 5.19 Some HR units visited have minimal links with the contact centre – for example, there was little awareness of recruitment needs, ongoing training needs or predicted business growth.
- 5.20 With such a variance in the provision of HR support, there is also misunderstanding by some force HR managers as to the specific needs of centralised contact centres. As one HR manager asserted: "I know nothing about human resource management where the contact centre is involved! But they will not need **that** amount of staff!"
- 5.21 Developing the right contact centre resource staffing model has been a challenge for many forces. Some have engaged consultants to design a resource model; others have implemented new contact centre structures with no scientific modelling. Budget constraints mean that some forces cannot afford to apply the recommended staffing models. This has resulted in significant overtime, high sickness rates, low morale and increased numbers of customer complaints at not being able to get through. Not surprisingly this can have a significant impact on the quality of call management services.
- 5.22 Maintaining an appropriate staffing model relies heavily on the recruitment process and succession planning. For the police service, an important constraint is the time required for medical and security clearance – anything from three to six months.
- 5.23 The staffing model is also dependent on a flexible workforce. Most forces have introduced part-time staff and flexible start times to match demand and increase capacity (Figure 10). Some forces visited have either recently remodelled and increased staffing or are in the process of doing so. Others have not changed their staffing model since the late 1990s and rely heavily on significantly high overtime per annum to sustain performance – in one force as much as £650,000.

FIGURE 10: THE PERCENTAGE OF CONTACT MANAGEMENT CENTRES WITH FLEXIBLE WORKING PATTERNS



Source: response to HMIC questionnaire to forces, November 2004

- 5.24 There is a wide variance in the ratio of police staff to police officers working in contact centres, but typically 80 per cent are police staff and 20 per cent are police officers. Moves to maximise the number of police officers on frontline duties may alter this ratio further in favour of police staff. In some contact centres, police officer posts are often used to accommodate officers on recuperative duties. This is not problematic if officers possess the appropriate competencies and skills or receive adequate training. The contact centre is key to a force's service delivery and it is essential that staff working in this environment have the skills and ability to do the job.
- 5.25 HMIC's 2001 report, *Open all hours*, recommended that forces develop career structures for call handling staff. Encouragingly, 92 per cent of forces now have career progression opportunities for staff within their contact management centres (see the good practice case study below). This may have been instrumental in achieving the relatively low staff turnover of 14 per cent: much lower than the 27 per cent figure currently applying in the private sector.

#### GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY: CAREER PROGRESSION SCHEME

Kent Police has a clear career progression scheme that is linked to pay structure. It also has assessment criteria at each competency level. Every member of staff in the contact centre is given a competency booklet specific to their role. They complete the relevant section of the booklet as each competency is achieved. It is then signed off by their supervisor. To ensure fairness in the system, an independent assessment is carried out on a regular basis. Pay and rewards are linked to the acquisition of competencies.

- 5.26 An essential element in equipping staff with the necessary skill and motivation to carry out their functions is a PDR system that seeks to provide the opportunity to make a full contribution to the success of the contact centre. All forces have a PDR system in place, together with performance appraisals, to involve staff in understanding what is expected of them and to make the most of their abilities, commitment and knowledge. Previous HMIC research<sup>25</sup> has shown that not all these systems are effective or fully implemented. A number of forces in the UK have already achieved, or are working towards, the Investors in People (IIP) Standard. IIP is an effective way of recognising that success depends on employees, and investing in them to this standard often results in increased customer satisfaction. One of the objectives in the Police Training and Development Board business plan is that forces should be working towards IIP status by April 2005.
- 5.27 The private sector has linked performance to both staff and customer satisfaction and hence undertakes extensive research, through surveys and interviews, to gauge staff opinion. The relevance of this link to policing was reinforced in 2001, in the *Open all hours* report, but only 37 per cent of forces currently conduct staff surveys. In addition, only 17 per cent of forces carry out exit interviews, suggesting that the service is missing opportunities to identify why it is losing valuable staff and to take steps to remedy potentially damaging situations.

#### SUGGESTION J

All forces should ensure that when using police officers on restricted duties within the contact centre, those officers should go through formal selection processes and have the appropriate competencies, skills and training to carry out the function.

<sup>25</sup> *Best value review inspection of training*, HMIC, 2003/04.

### RECOMMENDATION 10

All forces should undertake regular staff surveys and exit interviews and use the results to form an action plan to improve the quality of services provided.

- 5.28 Fortunately, staff turnover rates are relatively low. Almost two thirds of forces have put into place effective initiatives for managing sickness, retention and staff turnover to deliver a good service. However, recent surveys have highlighted factors influencing retention or loss of staff in control environments.
- 5.29 Many police staff complained about the diversity of agreements between forces and authorities in relation to pay and conditions. Although there is evidence of favourable comparison with the private sector, the uneven pay distribution for the same or similar jobs within police contact centres is a concern which UNISON is seeking to address through a national agreement.
- 5.30 In police contact centres the maximum wage ranges from £13,743 to £23,181, not including shift allowances. There is no geographical divide in pay levels. Appropriate pay structures, good working conditions and career progression opportunities will help ensure that forces benefit from the professionalism and commitment of contact centre staff.
- 5.31 A good work-life balance is now regarded as an essential element in any HR strategy, but UNISON's recent survey of police contact centre staff indicated that the service needs to progress this:
- 25 per cent of respondents are asked to change their shift start time with less than 72 hours' notice at least once a month.
  - 27 per cent are exhausted after work 'all the time', as are 41 per cent 'quite often'. The respective figures still thinking about work after they have left are 16 per cent and 37 per cent.
  - More than 33 per cent of the workforce have their sleep routinely disrupted by work concerns.
  - 33 per cent of respondents state that changes to shifts cause family problems 'all the time', and 48 per cent say these changes have a similar effect on their social life.
  - Difficulties 'all the time' in taking lieu days or holidays are reported by more than 50 per cent of respondents.

### CONCLUSION

- 5.32 Human resource management is a key function in contact centre management where a high-involvement approach is required. A specific HR strategy should be in place in every force encompassing:
- an effective staffing model;
  - the provision the right skills and tools for the job;
  - robust procedures and processes to combat the effects of sickness and staff turnover;
  - high-quality recruitment and retention processes; and
  - a good work-life balance.

Without such a strategy, forces will struggle to deliver a high-quality service to the public.

- 5.33** The single most important 'people' issue, however, is that the whole organisation needs to recognise the importance of professionalism in contact management. There is, therefore, a need for appropriate HR expertise – often greater than that for the BCU being served.



## 6. Professionalism through skills and training



## 6. Professionalism through skills and training

### INTRODUCTION

- 6.1 One of the main drivers influencing success within police contact centres is the professionalism displayed at the first point of contact, which is directly dependent on the skills and training of the staff involved. Studies on customer satisfaction have indicated that employee empowerment is seen as the key to delivering customer satisfaction. Part of employee empowerment is to provide staff with the skills and tools to deliver a quality service. This training is vital. Skills, training and education address those competencies that a successful member of staff learns, develops and demonstrates during their career at a contact centre. This includes the initial induction, on-the-job coaching and ongoing training packages and programmes.

### WHAT SHOULD 'GOOD' PERFORMANCE LOOK LIKE?

- 6.2 Good practice within this area requires that training should be based on a set of core skills relevant to both operational policing and the specific call handler role. The framework that manages police training requires each force to provide a training strategy which is informed by the force costed HR strategy. The training strategy then enables the force annual costed training plan. The plan provides the overall training requirement and cost for the force and should include training identified for first-contact staff. It is expected that all forces will have the following in place in respect of contact staff:

- a force costed training strategy that supports the costed HR strategy;
- ***a training plan that is costed, planned and designed around customer needs and expectation, including feedback and customer and staff surveys, information from operational staff, and organisational requirements. Training delivery and success must be evaluated and measured against contact centre performance;***
- ***training needs analysis that drives training delivery and is clearly linked to personal development plans;***
- ***relevant and specific training linked to current policies, procedures, relevant legislation and organisational goals for staff at all levels;***
- training delivered through cost-effective methods, exploiting technology where appropriate;
- ***provision of appropriately qualified and dedicated training staff and facilities;***
- ***mentoring/tutoring processes for new and existing staff;***
- ***a staffing model which allows training to take place, without impacting on operational performance;***
- ***evaluation of the training and learning process undertaken by staff which feeds back into training needs analysis and design;*** and
- ***appropriately designed and delivered cost-effective induction training.***

(Note: The elements highlighted in bold italics represent issues already included, either in full or in part, in the NCHS.)

**WHAT IS COMMERCIAL GOOD PRACTICE?**

- 6.3 Training for contact staff should be the professional responsibility of the head of training, who should ensure appropriate training cycle management, quality assurance and costing of the process. The contact centre manager should be responsible for ensuring the content of the training is appropriate for the roles undertaken.
- 6.4 A contact management training plan should be designed around organisational needs and should be informed by a robust training needs analysis and personal development plans. A training plan should be costed, designed around the customer experience and evaluated against its effectiveness in the workplace and against overall performance delivery. Contact centre training should include specialist and systems training, soft skills training, management training, call handling techniques, time management and policy and procedure training. (See the good practice case study below.)

**GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY: CUSTOMER FEEDBACK**

Thomas Cook Signature carries out significant customer research using a variety of methods. Its training programme is designed around customer feedback, and training is redesigned if required. This training is costed and return on investment measured against customer experience and retention. Thomas Cook relies on high-quality training to deliver good customer service, which has resulted in the company being a leader in its field.

- 6.5 In the private sector, training costs vary dramatically, and core training and development can vary from 2 to 99 days per member of staff per year. Historically, research suggests that contact centre training was not held in high regard by staff in receipt. The recently published CCA report (Institute of Work Psychology, 2004) suggests that the situation has improved but there are still big differences in approach, investment and quality of training delivery.
- 6.6 Some commercial call centres opted to use scripting to reduce training time, which involved hard-copy cards or screen-based configuration that required staff to follow a predetermined script. As a cost-cutting exercise, commercial call centres replaced training with scripting, although they have now moved away from this practice, as it resulted in increased staff turnover. Reliance on scripts did not increase knowledge and did not empower staff to make decisions. Prompts are now more popular. They are reminders, assist in the decision-making process and are designed around key words.
- 6.7 Training in private sector contact management is routinely delivered by dedicated training teams. The benefits of this approach are that teams are often available 24/7 and can deliver training outside peak contact centre hours. Training coaches also act as mentors and deliver training on a variety of subjects to new trainees and experienced staff.
- 6.8 Methods for training delivery include classroom-based teaching, distance learning, e-learning and computer-based training. Selecting a method of training that meets the needs of the organisation and employees depends on the complexity of training needs, cost and staff availability. Induction training is the first building block for staff joining the contact centre. It is normally classroom-based but can be modular, with

staff attending classroom training, on-site shadowing or distance learning. Evaluation of training will provide information about the appropriateness of the content and can inform the delivery methodology of the training. Staff availability will vary, and e-learning and computer-based training are two good methods for using quiet periods of time to train. Having these methods of training available to staff can enhance classroom-based training and deliver induction or refresher training.

- 6.9 A very positive aspect of the commercial contact centre arena is that formal qualifications are plentiful, ranging from National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) for frontline staff to Masters degrees in contact centre management. Bespoke qualifications are also available, although not all are recognised by relevant associations such as the Call Centre Association.

### HOW GOOD IS CURRENT POLICE PERFORMANCE?

- 6.10 A number of fieldwork forces have clear training strategies developed using training needs analyses, but other forces visited have not yet developed a contact centre training strategy. Only 51 per cent of forces have a costed training plan. Most forces invest in initial training, but 42 per cent fail to undertake refresher training for existing staff, including managers and supervisors. (See the good practice case study below.)

#### GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY: TRAINING STRATEGY

Kent Police has a training strategy which has been designed around a training needs analysis. The force has a structured induction course, including a video which follows an arrest through the process. The training strategy has been linked to organisational need, as well as individual needs and a career progression plan. The force has a dedicated training team and a facility that will deliver face-to-face training 24/7. This allows use of quiet times to increase staff training.

**“I joined the force contact centre sixteen years ago, and have only had minimum training, the bulk of my training was delivered on induction. We currently have no refresher training at all.”** Contact centre supervisor

#### SUGGESTION K

All forces should design and develop an appropriate induction package, together with basic training in contact centre management. All senior management promoted or appointed as head of the contact centre should have the necessary skills base prior to appointment within call management.

- 6.11 Training needs analysis is key to delivering cost-effective training. While 91 per cent of forces evaluate contact centre training, only 31 per cent of them stated that they evaluated it to the Kirkpatrick standard level three and four. (Kirkpatrick is a recognised measurement in training assessment.) Level three means that staff have understood training and can then demonstrate that the training has been taken back into the workplace and used effectively. Level four indicates evidence that training had a clear and positive impact on service delivery.
- 6.12 The thematic inspection convened a number of expert focus groups, which included superintendents in the roles of head of contact centre or contact centre manager. They identified that those appointed to the function in senior police managerial positions usually have little or no experience of contact centre management. There was a consensus view that there should be a standard induction package available, appropriate to each working level.

- 6.13 Some forces have introduced accredited formal training qualifications, such as NVQs. Warwickshire Police has a recognised qualification for dispatchers and call-takers which was designed in-house and accredited by the Oxford and Cambridge Royal Society. This has been in place since 2000. Funding from the Learning Skills Council may sometimes be available to forces. However, forces need to apply before funding is released.
- 6.14 At the instigation of Fife Constabulary, collaboration has been established between Scottish forces, the Scottish Police College and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). They have designed and produced a formal professional development qualification, validated by the SQA, for contact centre staff to Scottish Vocational Qualification level three. The programme is administered and monitored by the college on behalf of forces, who recommend suitable candidates to take part in the training programme.
- 6.15 Led by ACPO, work is currently underway to introduce a nationally accredited qualification for call-takers and dispatchers. This is scheduled to be available by the end of 2005. Skills for Justice<sup>26</sup>, as part of their e-learning programme and in consultation with forces, has designed a further unit for the current NVQ that is available for call-takers to make the NVQ police-specific. The new unit is awaiting approval and should be available by the end of this year.

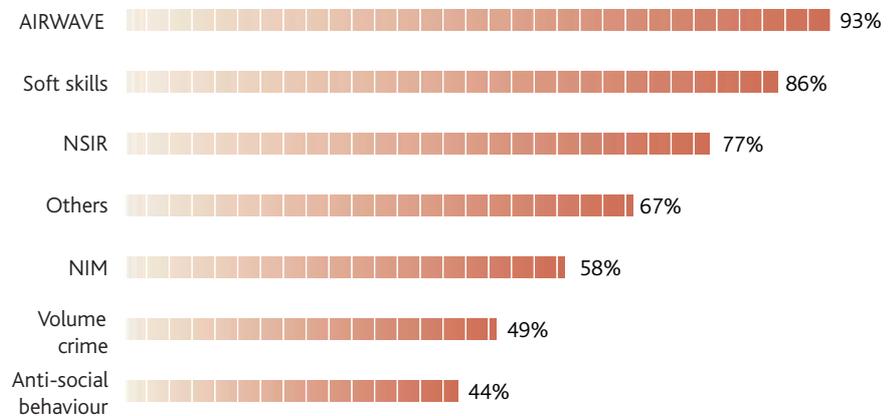
**RECOMMENDATION 11**

ACPO, on behalf of the service, should establish an externally accredited National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) to provide a consistent approach to standards and training.

- 6.16 68 per cent of forces stated that they delivered specialist training for contact centre staff. During the thematic inspection site visits and focus groups the capture of information from the caller at the first point of contact was cited as a particular problem. There appeared to be a lack of understanding of the part individual call-takers play in the process of capturing accurate information and how it impacts on the NIM and overall performance.
- 6.17 Staffordshire Police has taken the initiative to develop the nationally agreed Professionalising the Investigation Process (PIP) and has designated contact centre staff as 'first line investigators'. They are assessed by a senior investigating officer against the PIP criteria prior to receiving the designation. Once designated, the successful candidate is reassessed at regular intervals. This highlights the valuable role that contact centre staff have to play in collecting real-time intelligence and first scene preservation to take full advantage of forensic and investigative opportunities.

<sup>26</sup> Skills for Justice are responsible for making sure that people who work within the UK Criminal Justice sector have the right skills to do their job.

**FIGURE 11: THE PERCENTAGE OF CONTACT MANAGEMENT CENTRES THAT PROVIDE TRAINING IN SPECIALIST OPERATIONAL AREAS TO SUPPORT CONTACT MANAGEMENT STAFF**



Source: response to HMIC questionnaire to forces, November 2004

- 6.18** The police service has been innovative in using a variety of methods to deliver training. As well as the tried and tested 'chalk and talk' method, forces use one-to-one training and distance learning. A number of forces have made appropriate use of technology to deliver training, such as computer-based packages and e-learning. Using these approaches has allowed forces to deliver training to staff at times when it suits the organisation and the individual. The approaches have minimal effect on the operational needs and are cost-effective for the contact centre. All training should be evaluated to ensure that it is fit for purpose in terms of design, content and delivery methodology, and that is cost-effective in respect of finance and people resources.
- 6.19** Forces are using casual and, in some cases, agency staff to resource their contact centres. But 82 per cent of forces deliver appropriate training for agency and casual staff. It is important for all forces to note that casual staff need the same in-depth training as full-time members of staff, as they deal with the same incidents and calls. Thames Valley Police is currently using an interactive training package called Street Craft that allows officers or groups of staff to test decision-making skills in a controlled environment. This package is currently under development for contact management staff and is scheduled for implementation in October 2005. (See the good practice case study overleaf.)

**GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY: COMPUTER-BASED TRAINING**

Staffordshire Police has designed a computer-based package in partnership with a commercial company (Concept 5D). It has been designed in four concise modules, founded on tried-and-tested inter-personnel skill models, which have been applied to the police environment and written for the police service. The package provides training in:

- basic call handling skills;
- questioning skills;
- caller expectation setting; and
- self-care and stress management.

The force has been using this package for three years and has evaluated its impact against customer satisfaction. Current customer satisfaction levels are 96 per cent for non-999 calls and 98 per cent for 999 calls.

- 6.20** The role of the call-taker in a policing environment is both complex and demanding compared to some commercial call centres, where the work can be described as repetitive and unchallenging. This places increased emphasis on the requirement for a high level of appropriate training. The introduction of a tutor or mentor role provides a high level of support and developmental training, essential to enabling staff to understand and apply current policies, procedures, relevant legislation and organisational goals.
- 6.21** Several forces visited had introduced mentors or tutors; some had trained these members of staff and had a selection procedure in place. The impact of this initiative has been reported by forces to be positive. North Wales Police stated that it has raised staff morale, had a positive impact on customer satisfaction and created a career development path since the introduction of mentors a year ago.

**RECOMMENDATION 12**

All forces should introduce a mentoring and tutoring process for new and existing staff to provide the support they require at a vital stage in their development and help improve their skills base which, in turn, will lead to a better service provision.

- 6.22** In forces visited, all call handling staff stated that they had received induction training. The response to the thematic questionnaire revealed that 28 forces train supervisors, mentors and managers. One force does not deliver any training at all to supervisors. During the focus group carried out by the thematic inspection, some contact centre supervisors stated that there was no induction package for them and they hadn't received training until they had been in post for some time. All those asked would have liked an induction package and relevant training at the start or near to the start of their post.

**SUGGESTION 1**

Forces should acknowledge the role the contact centre has to play in delivering customer service. In many cases the size of the department and its specialism suggests that it would benefit from having a dedicated team of trainers and appropriate training facilities for contact management staff.



- 6.23 *Open all hours* (2001) identified that commercial call centres extensively use scripting, a card system being developed at that time. However, technology has improved to the point where the card system is becoming redundant. To support staff in the decision-making process, several forces have developed the use of prompting by using command and control computer system features to remind call-takers to ask specific questions around certain incidents. Computerisation of this process has been largely successful, as staff have found that it speeds the decision-making process and helps with more complex calls. It is important to note that scripting or prompting should assist in the process and not slow the process down or be difficult for staff to use effectively.

### CONCLUSION

- 6.24 Specific, relevant training which has a clear link to police objectives and has a return on investment is critical in staff retention, empowerment and overall performance. Contact management requires specialised skills and must be considered as a police specialism, with nationally recognised training courses and accredited qualifications. The importance of tutoring and mentoring and staff briefing in developing and engaging staff cannot be overstated.
- 6.25 Facilities to deliver training, dedicated teams and the correct staffing model to allow staff to be released for training and development are also important factors to take into consideration. Some forces perform well in this area, but there are vast differences in investment, facilities and standard of training. The gap needs to be narrowed by adopting the suggestions and recommendations in this chapter and by sharing best practice across the service.

## 7. The right location and facilities



## 7. The right location and facilities

### INTRODUCTION

- 7.1 Having taken the strategic decision to centralise or devolve the contact management function, important but all too often neglected decisions are:
- where best to locate a facility; and
  - how to provide the working environment required to get the very best from staff.
- 7.2 While location can often be predetermined, for example by history or finance, the working environment is always worthy of significant consideration, as it certainly is not a neutral factor in delivery of service. Call centre work can be intensive, pressurised and at times stressful, most notably at busy times, when call completion is prioritised and staff breaks are minimised. In such circumstances, call handlers can exercise only limited control and empowerment. The consequences can reduce employee morale and wellbeing and lead to ill-health or high staff turnover<sup>27</sup>.
- 7.3 Providing a suitable, appropriate and well-designed working environment has a positive impact on performance, staff recruitment and retention, and overall staff satisfaction, which in turn improves customer satisfaction.

### WHAT SHOULD 'GOOD' PERFORMANCE LOOK LIKE?

- 7.4 The police contact management function should be located and equipped to ensure that:
- the location (or locations) match operational requirements (for example, dispersed contact centres are co-located with relevant BCUs) with contingency facilities to protect resilience;
  - sites should be easily accessible, with adequate car parking space, to encourage external recruitment and retention of appropriately skilled staff;
  - ***workplace design supports required workflows, provides appropriate lighting, heating and air quality and meets all health and safety requirements;***
  - dedicated areas provide personal space and privacy for refreshments, meetings and management interviews;
  - equipment and furniture is fit for purpose and comfortable to use; and
  - staff can give feedback and contribute to design and ongoing maintenance of an appropriate working environment.

(Note: The element above highlighted in bold italics represents an issue already included in the NCHS, although there is no specific section in the NCHS on location and facilities.)

### WHAT IS COMMERCIAL GOOD PRACTICE?

- 7.5 Many private sector companies can locate their contact management operation virtually anywhere in the world in order to obtain the optimal mix of facilities, staffing, costs and performance, as demonstrated during a visit to the English headquarters of the company SAS. SAS provides business intelligence software and services and has sited its contact centres in prime locations throughout the world.

<sup>27</sup> 'Work relationships in telephone call centres: understanding emotional exhaustion and employee withdrawal', Deery, Iverson and Walsh, *Journal of Management Studies*, 2002.

The acquisition of substantial country estates and historic castles provide accommodation which assists in attracting and retaining staff. Site location, the availability of suitably qualified staff, accessible housing and good transport links also assist in providing an attractive working environment. The company engages with employees through staging family awareness days and social functions, while offering family support services on a myriad of social, financial and health-related topics.

- 7.6 Some of these advantages are difficult for the public sector to achieve, and identifying the best location and facilities is often more problematic than for private sector companies. Locating key facilities outside the authority area may be an unacceptable option. Often, location is driven by the need for proximity to a service headquarters, while a long-established centre that is no longer fit for purpose may cost too much to replace.
- 7.7 Relocation can also bring problems. Organisations need to consider other call centres in the same area and their potential effect on recruitment, as the pool of staff with skills or experience may already be exhausted. The call centre environment itself should reflect good ergonomic design, acoustics, lighting levels, air quality, and personal space and privacy. Well-designed furniture will minimise repetitive strain injury and allow staff to work in comfortable surroundings.
- 7.8 Consideration of occupational health and safety issues is a key component in the design of an effective workplace. Work space should be allocated to meet the needs of both cost-effective communication and reasonable levels of privacy. Call centres with open-plan layouts and with a modular format provide flexibility for future growth, as well as allowing a team-based environment. Grouping staff together helps to promote and sustain team development, especially where team leaders work near their teams so that they can quickly identify and resolve problems. Team leaders should also be allocated additional work space for meetings and tracking work performance.

### **HOW GOOD IS CURRENT POLICE PERFORMANCE?**

#### **Location**

- 7.9 The location of most police contact centres owes more to historical factors than to fundamental design decisions. Many represent refurbishments or extensions to previously-owned police buildings, often co-located with force headquarters. With the advent of Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and Public Private Partnership (PPP) initiatives, however, there are an increasing number of new-build premises, both located within existing headquarters' boundaries or on wholly new sites.
- 7.10 One force that has adopted an approach more akin to SAS is Hampshire Constabulary. The force has invested heavily in its new force control room at Netley, near Southampton. The building is located in a large country estate near the coast, with ample parking and readily accessible transport routes. The working environment is bright, spacious and well designed and provides a welcoming atmosphere. The facility is close to shopping areas and is equipped to cater for a variety of staff welfare needs, including recreational and personal training facilities. Staff regard the overall workplace to be excellent and "appealing to future employees".

- 7.11 In Scotland, Strathclyde Police has built two new joint control and call handling centres to supplement the existing force control room at its headquarters. North Wales Police is moving its control and contact centre to a new joint emergency services building, built on a greenfield site in conjunction with the Welsh Fire Brigade and Ambulance Service. This joint venture mirrors similar projects operating within both Wiltshire and Gloucestershire Constabularies, but separate initiatives may see English fire services moving out to regional bases elsewhere.
- 7.12 In a different approach to contact management, Tayside Police has opted for a 'virtual' call handling unit with 18 stations linked via the force telephony system to the force control room at headquarters. This approach is designed to allow the force to retain a local dimension to call handling, with callers put through to their local station. If unanswered, a call cascades to adjacent stations or the force control room. While having potential advantages, this approach also requires robust organisation and management. Without clear and effective workforce and demand management, there is a danger of poor service or unnecessary call queuing at individual stations.

### Facilities

- 7.13 Fieldwork and research show that where staff have direct and continuing involvement in the creation of the facilities they work in, satisfaction and performance are improved (see the good practice case study below).

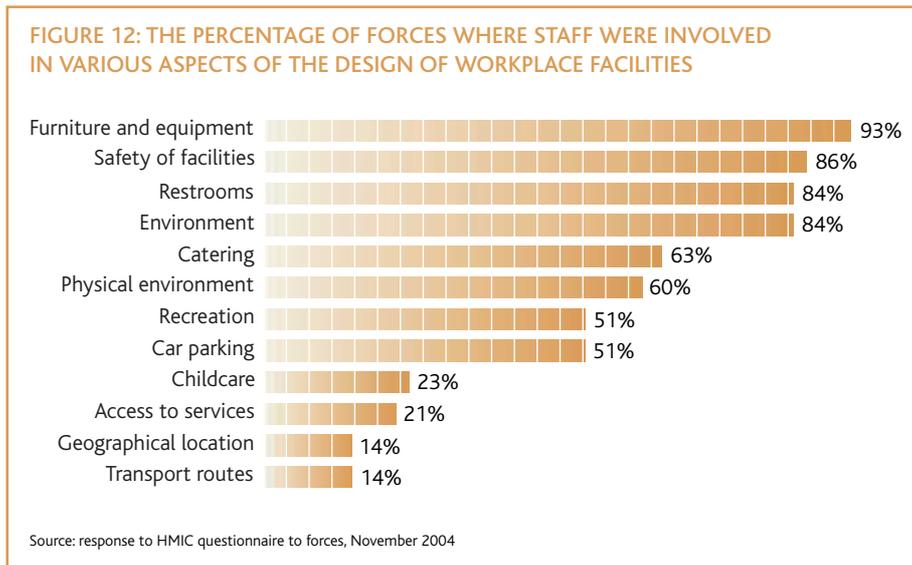


#### GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY: STAFF INVOLVEMENT IN LOCATION AND DESIGN

Lothian and Borders Police selected a brownfield site for its new contact centre, designing it in close liaison with staff. When choosing the location the force took into consideration cost, geography, transport links and physical security of staff. The centre was ergonomically designed and includes a fitness room, briefing and training areas and a large open atrium where staff can take comfort breaks.

Feedback from staff is good and, despite early problems with relocation, performance has continued to improve. Involvement in selecting the location and facilities has proved a significant factor in enhancing operator satisfaction and staff retention during the transitional period.

7.14 Figure 12 shows the percentage of forces where staff were involved in various aspects of the design of workplace facilities.



7.15 There is also evidence that a lack of investment can have a damaging effect on performance and staff morale. When facilities are no longer 'fit for purpose', through a failure to modernise in response to changing social demands and technological advances, performance has suffered.

7.16 One force made no significant financial or staffing investment in its contact management centres over a nine-year period, resulting in serious failings. In 2004, it had to close some 25 per cent of the function to carry out basic accommodation upgrading. Evidence from BT clearly demonstrates that during the period of closure the number of recorded 999 calls delayed more than two minutes before being answered rose by 66 per cent, from a monthly figure of 729 to over 1100. The force was unable to provide any fallback to cater for the diverted 999 calls, incorrectly expecting the remaining facilities to absorb the 25 per cent increase into normal workloads.

7.17 In 2003, one force was served with an improvement notice from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) following concerns about the adequacy and provision of heating and lighting within the call management centre. A further issue identified was the lack of capacity for raising and lowering desks to accommodate staff, which resulted in the force being given 12 months to improve its contact centre working environment. The matters were addressed to the satisfaction of the HSE and the investment, which included the introduction of electronically adjustable desks, proved worthwhile: a subsequent evaluation of staff sickness levels identified a reduction in illness related to back problems.

7.18 The inspection found individual examples of both good and bad practice in all areas of environmental design. Those set out below give a flavour of the range of findings:

### Lighting and heating

7.19 One force completed its new call handling centre in 2005 only to realise that the heating was inadequate at certain times of the year and it had to be augmented with temporary industrial heaters. Another force experienced similar early problems, with the PFI consortium providing mobile heating and air conditioning in winter and summer respectively.

**“The working environment needs assessing. Air conditioning seems to blow out hot air when it is hot and vice-versa. It might seem a very petty or minor point to some, but when one is sitting at a desk for up to 12 hours a day, without being able to leave the desk if it is busy, it is possibly the most complained about and important aspect.”**

Communications officer, male, aged 31, three years service

7.20 In research carried out for UNISON, 62 per cent of police contact centre staff found the ambient temperature in their workplace to be either too high or too low, with 57 per cent finding it too stuffy or too draughty<sup>28</sup>. Many staff believed that the working environment was contributing to high levels of illness and absence, and that it was exacerbating the strains induced by long periods of intense, repetitive and sedentary work.

### Rest areas

7.21 Lothian and Borders Police, Fife Constabulary, North Wales Police and Norfolk Constabulary have introduced designated staff rest areas incorporating an open atrium design. Although located within call handling centres, rest areas are completely separate from the working environment, allowing staff an effective break from the workplace.

### Training and meeting facilities

7.22 Gloucestershire Constabulary and Kent Police have created training areas and meeting facilities that are used solely by call handling staff. The rooms are readily accessible within the confines of the building, which permits timely access to facilities and maximum training to take place during shift overlaps.

7.23 Two forces which did not provide dedicated training rooms within their new-build facilities have subsequently experienced difficulty in providing training for staff.

<sup>28</sup> *The thin front line: call handling in police control rooms*, Bain, Taylor and Dutton, 2005.

7.24 There is no current national guidance for police forces on the design of control rooms or contact management centres. The only official document unearthed by the inspection is part of a weighty publication from the Home Office Architectural Research and Advisory Group: the *Police building design guide* (1994). One short section covers the control room and communications facility. Advice is very high-level and non-specific, and includes:

**“Location: Site selection, whether a green field or urban site, should satisfy the needs of radio reception, access and security.”**

**“Accommodation, unit areas: Room area is determined by the number of personnel using the facility under normal condition as well as the amount and nature of fixed and moveable equipment...”**

7.25 In the past few years, police forces have employed consultants, designers and architects at significant expense and, undoubtedly, each has addressed very similar design and ergonomic challenges. There should by this time be a pool of knowledge within the service that would greatly assist any force considering establishment of such a facility, either as a refurbishment or new-build, but this information is currently not shared. While there is guidance on the design of police buildings, this is outdated and no longer relevant to modern contact management facilities.

#### RECOMMENDATION 13

The Home Office should produce an updated guide to the design of police control room and communications facilities, to include good practice and minimum specifications for the design and refurbishment of police contact centre accommodation.

#### CONCLUSION

7.26 The location of premises and working environment have a significant impact on staff satisfaction and, therefore, on service delivery. While some of the luxurious contact centres of private companies such as SAS are out of the reach of the public sector, forces should avoid persisting with unsuitable premises and low-budget facilities that may produce a short-term financial saving but in the longer term cost the organisation more in both monetary and performance terms.

7.27 There has been major activity in terms of new-build, refurbishment and consolidation, and it is surprising that there is no central reference point from which to access the good practice and lessons learned from this activity. If each force continues to plan and implement relocation and refurbishments from scratch, without the benefit of such advice, it will continue to produce fertile ground for expensive consultants.



#### SUGGESTION M

Design and facilities of contact management centres should be included in discussions at the national police contact management forum. (See Chapter 3.)



## 8. Getting the best from technology



## 8. Getting the best from technology

### INTRODUCTION

- 8.1 It is impossible to overlook the importance of technology in control and communications environments. Ironically, however, over-concentration on finding the latest and most cutting-edge IT solution can detract from effective procedures and practice. There are almost as many IT options for contact centres as there are IT companies or consultants. This report does not seek to provide a guide to individual brands or products but concentrates on the generic technologies, over and above the basic computer and telephone, that assist in managing the relationship with the customer, and which support staff engaged in customer interactions. Such technologies are crucial to the evolution of the call centre into a customer contact centre with a focus on high-quality customer service.
- 8.2 An appropriate and judicious use of technology in a contact centre can greatly improve its performance. Technology covers the variety of IT-related products and enhancements that enable the delivery and handling of calls and other business information. This can take the form of automatic call distribution (ACD) to make the process more efficient, or speech recognition software to reduce transaction times and call duration<sup>29</sup>.
- 8.3 With individual police forces handling millions of calls each year, the need for efficient call handling procedures and management systems is greater than ever. In addition, there is a significantly increased requirement to monitor and track the progress of calls throughout the force to meet efficiency standards and public service obligations.
- 8.4 Increased demand for service over the telephone, by email or via the internet also means increased responsibility and pressure to ensure that communications are not only handled efficiently but are resolved effectively, preferably at the first point of contact. While it is essential to offer a quick answer to a caller, it is also important to understand the drivers and motivations behind their contact to help shape future responses.
- 8.5 Contact management applications enable forces to log, track and report on all public interactions, providing vital mechanisms for recording critical data as well as improving future performance and increasing the ability to resolve issues at the first point of contact. This is vital, as scarce and expensive patrol officer resources should not be tied up in dealing with incidents that could be resolved by call handlers.



### WHAT SHOULD 'GOOD' PERFORMANCE LOOK LIKE?

- 8.6 For a force to consider itself at the forefront of good practice in the field of police contact management technology, it would need to have:
- appropriate technology matched to, and driven by, strategic and business requirements, integrated into current systems, user-friendly for staff and customers and adding value to the customer experience;

<sup>29</sup> *Contact centre benchmarking project report*, Advantage West Midlands, October 2004.

- a range of communication channels available to those seeking to contact the force, tailored to meet both customer and organisational needs;
- process workflows designed to reduce delay and duplication;
- timely, accurate and relevant information to call handlers at the point of interaction with the caller, to inform response;
- information and/or intelligence to aid decision making, grading and resolution of caller requests for assistance; and
- management and performance information to assist in supervision, assessment and improvement of services.

(Note: There is no guidance within the NCHS on technology.)

### **WHAT IS CURRENT COMMERCIAL AND POLICE PERFORMANCE?**

- 8.7 There are many technologies deployed within contact management but in essence, over and above core telephony, they fall into two broad categories. Firstly, there are those technologies that are customer-facing and impact on the methods of contact and initial capture of calls; secondly, there are those technologies that are more inward-facing and support the organisation in responding more effectively.

#### **Customer-facing technology**

##### **Automatic call distribution (ACD)**

- 8.8 With the increasing volumes of calls taken by police forces, ACD is becoming increasingly popular. ACD is a telephone system that, at its simplest, automatically offers calls to the next available call handler but can use quite sophisticated routing functions to reflect call priority and/or the available skills of the call handler.
- 8.9 To make best use of the skills-based routing, staff skills levels are entered into the supporting database, and where an incoming caller requires a specific area of expertise, the switchboard operator or the system itself (if using an interactive voice response) selects the appropriate call handler. Some 38 per cent of forces either have or are in the process of purchasing a product from Siemens called HiPath ProCentre, which is a skills-based routing ACD system, designed around a staff skills database.
- 8.10 Many ACD systems also include sophisticated packages that provide invaluable call management analysis and real-time reporting to allow supervisors and managers the opportunity to both monitor and manage the level of incoming calls, route calls to call handlers with appropriate skills and properly manage the demand on staff.

##### **Interactive voice responses (IVR) and auto attendant**

- 8.11 Also known as automated voice recognition, this application has two main forms: voice activated (IVR) and telephone tone-operated (auto attendant). With the latter option, the inbound call is answered by a recording that offers a menu of options, using nominated keypad buttons. The option selected may then instruct the system to route a call or present certain information to the caller, converted into speech. With voice activation, the system can navigate more complex options through recognition of speech-based answers.

- 8.12 Modern IVR systems have vastly improved on the early versions that gave a negative perception to users, primarily because they were poorly planned and developed. Many commercial companies such as travel agents now see the benefits of using the technology, and at least 60 per cent of contact centres use IVR technology to provide various levels of self-service functionality to their callers. IVR and speech applications are predominantly used to route callers. Given the drive towards lowering the cost of service, informed observers find it surprising that even more effort has not been made to increase the usage of IVR within contact centres<sup>30</sup>.
- 8.13 Currently, seven per cent of forces deploy IVR and 40 per cent use auto attendants. The use of IVR in the police service could usefully be extended to capture customer feedback on the service they have just received from the contact centre. The caller can be asked at the end of their call if they wish to participate in a customer survey. If they agree, the call is transferred to the IVR and the caller is asked a number of questions which they respond to by using their keypad. This would provide timely feedback on customer satisfaction for forces to act upon.
- 8.14 Forces are also now beginning to use an IVR system developed by Siemens Communications that uses speech recognition to enhance internal telephone directories. It is possible to ask for a person by name without having to go through a force switchboard.
- 8.15 Research shows that whilst 67 per cent of callers are happy to engage with basic IVR systems, 74 per cent of customers consider speech-enabled IVR a satisfactory alternative to 24-hour live operator service<sup>31</sup>.



### Direct dial inward (DDI) and voicemail

- 8.16 DDI is a key feature of Integrated Services Digital Network and is relatively well established compared with some of the newer technologies. It assigns individual phone numbers to extensions and departments, enabling callers to dial directly without having to go through the switchboard operator. This diversion reduces the number of inbound calls to the switchboard and improves performance and customer satisfaction in respect of those calls that, by necessity, still need switchboard operator intervention.
- 8.17 Voicemail is another well-established option. However, it is not simply an answering machine for unavailable staff. It has many other features such as alerting the recipient or an administrator when an urgent message is received, sending single messages to groups and forwarding messages to predetermined numbers. Voicemail systems will also record different greetings for internal and external calls and also by time of day or month, and they can offer the facility to pick up messages remotely.

<sup>30</sup> *Global contact centre benchmarking report*, Merchants, 2005.

<sup>31</sup> Datapoint research, 2005.

- 8.18** DDI and voicemail are both well established in the police service. Although greater use can be made of the more sophisticated options available, the service has a good understanding of capabilities, and forces will undoubtedly continue to expand their use. The use of voicemail combined with features of the new AIRWAVE police digital radio system is already aiding public accessibility to services such as neighbourhood beat officers.
- 8.19** With both DDI and voicemail, there must be robust policies and procedures in place to ensure that ownership and management of the system provide safeguards and monitoring. Without clear policy and ownership, there is the potential for calls and messages that are left for individual officers and staff to be ignored or forgotten, as a result of rest days, court, leave or other absence. This can result in a lack of professionalism and provide a poor quality of service to the public.

#### Customer relationship management (CRM)

- 8.20** Although included in the 'technology' chapter, CRM is not a pure IT product. While there are CRM engines and associated technologies, they should be deployed in support of a business strategy and policy. A true CRM system is designed to support the collection and analysis of customer-relevant information and make it available to the appropriate people so that staff can provide a service tailored to their requirements.
- 8.21** In policing terms, this approach could collate information from a force's computer systems to provide a call handler with a caller's recent contact history – previous calls, crime reports and other complaints made – to allow an informed response. It could also reveal, for example, whether the caller possesses a firearms certificate, or has a dangerous dog or a history of violence, for the benefit of frontline officers likely to attend an incident.
- 8.22** CRM is a growth area and can be beneficial – but it is not a panacea. In recent years, there has been much press coverage of spectacular, high-profile failures of individual CRM projects. It is important to appreciate that implementing CRM is not like installing updated versions of software. It is a major strategic step for any organisation, and involves massive change in business processes and culture. Gartner<sup>32</sup> (2001) reported that 70 per cent of CRM projects fail because of a misunderstanding of the key problems in their implementation. A survey of those involved in such projects revealed that before starting, 82 per cent felt that technology would be a major issue, but only 1 per cent cited 'culture' as particularly relevant. After the event, the percentages had changed significantly, to 10 per cent reporting IT issues but 20 per cent reporting cultural problems as a major factor in reality.
- 8.23** In comparison to the 28 to 43 per cent take-up of CRM in commercial call centres, only 12 per cent of police forces make use of a CRM system. HMIC does not consider this as necessarily a bad position for the service, since it is important to avoid the problems experienced in the private sector, where introduction of CRM technology was not accompanied by cultural and business process change. The forces currently engaged in CRM initiatives have had mixed success.

<sup>32</sup> Gartner Group case study 2001 [www.gartner.com/Init](http://www.gartner.com/Init)

**8.24** End users in two forces found their respective CRM products complicated to operate and frustrating to use and, consequently, operators have tended to switch them off. Both forces have recognised the problems and are redesigning and further developing systems around their processes to better meet the needs of staff and customers. Central Scotland Police has designed its own CRM product utilising solutions and systems already in use in the force and, therefore, tailored to specific requirements, rather than purchasing an off-the-shelf product. Avon and Somerset is taking steps to avoid implementation problems by commissioning MORI to carry out an in-depth customer research survey before designing a CRM system. The results will inform the design of a product around customer views and expectations. This approach brings the customer and supplier into a more productive collaborative partnership to deliver a product that should meet realistic expectations.



**8.25** An inherent danger is that forces might change their business processes to fit a CRM solution. CRM has to be thought of as a chance to revisit existing processes, to see if they need to be updated or optimised for achieving the strategic business goals. Forces should also be careful not to reinforce the bad processes that were holding back customer relationships in the first place. As management guru Tom Peters has warned, "When the system runs the business, there is no business".

### Computer telephony integration (CTI)

**8.26** A basic definition of CTI is that it allows old-fashioned exchanges to talk to databases and computers. CTI links computers and telephones to handle voice, fax, and data traffic. The benefits to be realised from implementation of CTI are:

- improved customer service – receiving customer details on the screen at the same time as the call is received;
- reduced costs – optimisation with voice, fax and data all sharing a single network; and
- greater efficiency – dialling out automatically with a single mouse click; capacity for more calls to be handled over a given period; monitoring the effectiveness of operating procedures; and automatic intelligent internal call routing.

**8.27** The most widely available function within CTI is 'screen-pop' – the automatic delivery to screen of a caller's details – with over 72 per cent of CTI users deploying this facility<sup>33</sup>.

**8.28** CTI can be seen as one of the key technology hurdles within contact centre architecture. Most organisations recognise its value, but the deployment effort can be rather daunting, representing both a technology and business process engineering challenge. Effective performance management and reporting are increasingly critical areas within contact centres that use CTI: most focus is placed on CTI-enabled reports, indicating the contact centre's need for more accurate visibility across call and business related information. Some 47 per cent of forces are using CTI and report that the benefits include a reduction in the time needed to take calls, availability of better caller details and access to management information in an easy-to-use format to improve performance.

<sup>33</sup> Merchants, *Global contact centre benchmarking report*, 2005.

### Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP)

- 8.29** Internet Protocol (IP) is the communication language that enables a network of computers to 'talk' to each other in order to send emails and share documents and other files. It is the underlying mechanism for the worldwide network of computers that make up the internet and the language that a browser's software uses to access websites. VoIP is the convergence of voice and data across networks.
- 8.30** As a technology, VoIP has many potential uses which go far beyond the ability to reduce point-to-point call charges. In many cases, it is the use of IP within a private network, rather than the public internet, that offers the most compelling return on investment. In recent years there has been much rethinking about the role of call centres: not only have they evolved to encompass other forms of communication, and so become contact centres, but smaller, more informal groups of people are now able to work remotely from home or smaller outposts.
- 8.31** Advantages of using VoIP compared to a network comprising data and telephony include:
- the creation of virtual contact centres;
  - cost-effective implementation of features standard in very large contact centres, such as IVR;
  - integrating previously separate silos of information about customers;
  - integrating groups of contact centre workers at different sites so they work as one team;
  - easy addition of extra call handlers on flexible working arrangements;
  - easy call recording and logging (conventional systems often require expensive equipment to record telephone calls); and
  - cost-effective, skills-based routing.
- 8.32** This means that in the future VoIP will be able to support new communications functions that don't even exist today. VoIP will serve as a platform for a more strategic infrastructure that combines voice with other data – so-called converged communications.

### Enhanced information service for emergency calls (EISEC)

- 8.33** EISEC, introduced by BT in 1998, populates a call handler's screen with the name and address of the subscriber making a 999 call. Its use continues to extend across the UK, with 65 of the 159 emergency service areas using this application. A particular benefit of EISEC is that the caller's name and address is provided automatically, even where the call is of a silent nature. Where EISEC is not in place, information on silent calls has to be obtained from the operator, thus extending the time of the call and, in many cases, delaying the dispatch of a police resource.
- 8.34** The inspection team was surprised to find that, despite all the acknowledged advantages associated with EISEC, only 58 per cent of forces are using it. A disadvantage of not having EISEC is when an irate or disturbed caller is on the line, and the police operator cannot hear or understand the information being imparted by the BT operator. The police operator will normally then have to ask the BT operator to split the line to allow free and uninterrupted conversation. With EISEC engaged,

time is saved, as the police would already have the caller line identification and be in a position to take action much sooner. An enhancement to the application has been introduced which enables the call taker to link mobile 999 callers through caller location identifiers with Geographic Information System mapping in command and control systems. A simple addition would be required to command-and-control systems to permit the information to be supplied. This would present a receiving mast grid reference and provide a marked radius of confidence to assist in locating the caller.

### RECOMMENDATION 14

All forces should introduce the EISEC software solution in 999 call management.

### Inward-facing technologies

#### Quality monitoring

- 8.35 A direct correlation exists between the accuracy, frequency and quality of monitoring and coaching and call quality. Put simply, the greater the investment in monitoring and coaching, the better the service provided to customers and the better the overall performance. Quality monitoring systems are available that will score calls, give objective measurement, provide objective and impartial feedback, record and assess live data and provide real-time data to help assess performance.
- 8.36 The fact that calls are monitored is not enough on its own to produce such results. Feedback is required in a timely manner and must be perceived by the person receiving it as relevant, unbiased, practical and objective. Many contact centres have invested in a costly or elaborate recording system, with a view to post-event analysis, but are unable to find the time to evaluate these recordings or to provide feedback in a timely manner, or even at all.
- 8.37 Some 60 per cent of forces are using some form of quality management system. A product called Nice is used by Hampshire Constabulary to look at the quality of the call through the use of voice recording. Using set parameters it will pick up certain words from the call and generate information for managers and staff about the quality of that call. There are simpler forms of quality management tools but the benefit of this system is that it is more timely, more objective in the assessment and, in terms of quantity, will provide a greater number of staff assessments.

#### Workforce management

- 8.38 Staff represent the single biggest investment within any call centre, typically accounting for over 80 per cent of total revenue costs. A fundamental goal of contact centre management is to provide the best and most cost-effective service, and so effective staff scheduling should be a top priority. Call volume profiles can vary dramatically throughout the day, week and seasonally, and hence staff scheduling is difficult; it becomes more complex as the number of functions within contact centres increases.

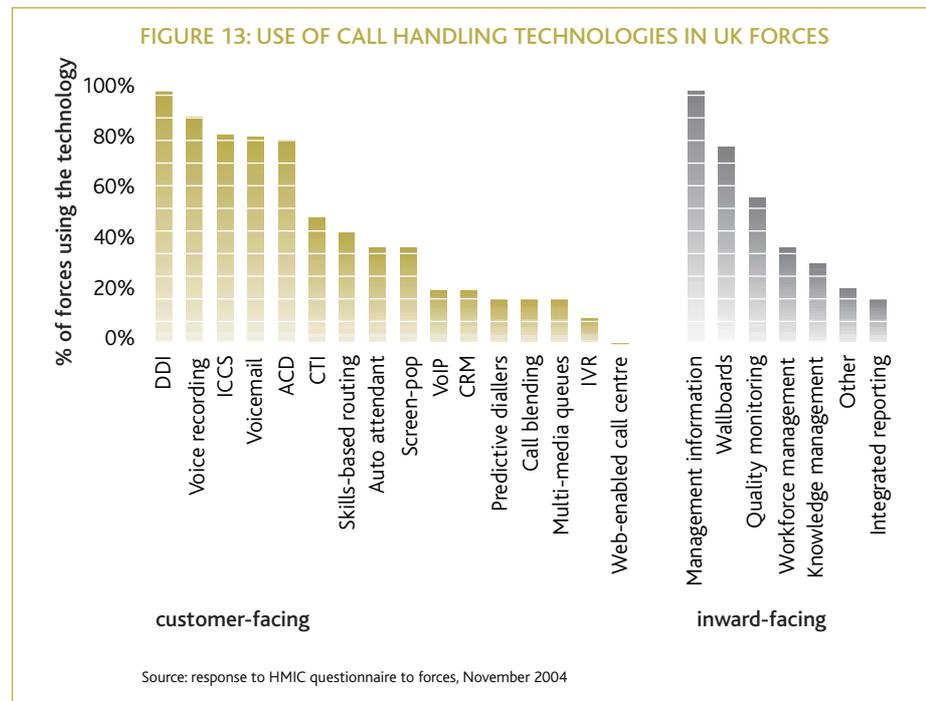
- 8.39** Workforce management systems are designed to aid resource planning, typically producing staff rotas and indicating staff adherence to their scheduled rota, which shows what is *actually* happening in the call centre in terms of staffing levels.
- 8.40** Among technological solutions to aid workforce or demand management, simulation models are currently the most popular. Unlike simple spreadsheets, simulation models take into account a number of variables in day-to-day operational processes within the contact centre. Based on the data inputted and the performance levels sought, solutions are provided for management to take appropriate action. Significant benefits can be achieved, including:
- better use of resources through identification of bottlenecks and spare capacity;
  - a simpler process for staff planning in a multi-skilled environment;
  - matching employees to the organisation's work requirements;
  - getting the right people in the right place at the right time;
  - maximising investment in people by sharing resources;
  - managing flexible working;
  - managing planned and unplanned absence; and
  - improving customer service levels.
- 8.41** Blue Pumpkin is one of a number of workforce management applications being used by forces. It provides statistical data that allow accurate call forecasting and planning staff requirements to achieve service levels. It also assists with management of leave, resource planning and timing of comfort breaks. Benefits include better match of staff levels and demand, reducing overstaffing, reduced sickness and improved customer satisfaction.

#### Management information

- 8.42** There are many options when considering a system to provide management and/or performance information. Virtually every IT system will provide at least some management data, but managers need a clear understanding of what needs to be measured for the benefit of the business or the customer, rather than just what can be measured. It is also important that technology is not allowed to drive behaviour to the detriment of overall business needs. Some organisations change business processes to optimise the capacity of the technology. If poorly targeted, technology can be a hindrance rather than an aid to effectiveness.
- 8.43** Research has shown that good practice does not appear to drive performance in the area of technology, and technology practice does not seem to affect overall centre performance to a significant degree. There is some correlation between technology practice and customer practice, suggesting that those who score well in technology are also likely to do so in the area of customer practices. A correlation also exists between performance in technology and performance in skills. Most centres that perform well in one of these areas should also do well in the other.

### HOW GOOD IS CURRENT POLICE PERFORMANCE?

- 8.44** While the police service is in some respects playing catch-up with the private sector, many forces are responding to the challenge by installing some of the leading commercial systems (Figure 13).



- 8.45** Individual forces are at very different stages of development in relation to the technologies they employ within contact management. The variation derives in part from their particular financial situation – whether a force has committed significant resources to IT procurement. It is also a product of the national IT context, however, where very few standard technologies have been produced and individual forces have had to find their own solutions.
- 8.46** The Police Information Technology Organisation (PITO) was established in 1998 to deliver a national information management and communications technology capability. Although never explicitly expressed, the original intention appears to have been that PITO should be the equivalent of a central police information, communication and technology (ICT) department, supplying national products in a similar way to how individual force ICT departments would locally. The problem was that very soon after starting down this path, the police ICT strategy changed significantly from a 'national systems' approach towards the building of an integrated information environment. While PITO continued to progress products from a suite of applications from the National Strategy for Police Information Systems (NSPIS), the service, and those of particular individual forces, have gone down different, more diverse paths.
- 8.47** Despite limited success over the years, PITO has failed to fully meet the needs of the police, partly because of its own shortcomings, but principally because PITO as a concept is now acknowledged as fundamentally flawed<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> *The McFarland Inquiry: report of the review of the Police Information Technology Organisation (PITO)*, Home Office, 2005.

- 8.48** The absence of national IT solutions was further criticised in the Bichard Inquiry report (2004)<sup>35</sup>, where the lack of co-ordination of criminal intelligence was identified as a significant factor in the tragedy that resulted in the deaths of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman at Soham, in Cambridgeshire. In light of the criticisms from these reports, and elsewhere, PITO is subject to reorganisation and will be subsumed in whole or in part into the new National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA), due to be functional by 2007.
- 8.49** In the meantime, forces that had previously adopted a 'wait for PITO delivery' policy are now seeking to catch up with counterparts that decided to go it alone. This is likely to further exacerbate the inconsistent procurement of technological solutions, producing a diversity of approach that limits the capacity for forces to interface with each other. Seeing both the problem and a potential market, new solutions are now being developed by technology vendors to improve integration. There are significant cost savings to be made by forces entering into a consortium to jointly purchase applications, as the increased buying power associated with multiple purchases can attract discounts from suppliers (see the good practice case study below).

#### GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY: INTER-FORCE COMPATIBILITY

Steria is one of the UK's leading command and control suppliers. Its established STORM solution is used by 15 police forces in the UK.

In order to meet an emerging police requirement, Steria has developed a Cross-Border Exchange interface module that will allow an individual police force to transmit incidents electronically to a destination force in real time. The module passes incident data using a defined Extensible Mark-up Language (XML) standard, via the Criminal Justice Extranet secure network.

Steria has also developed the module to interact with other command and control suppliers using the same XML exchange standard, and it can pass data to over 30 UK police forces (and soon the Highways Agency in England, which covers the all major motorways and trunk roads).

The benefits of passing data across force boundaries and even regions are realised by instant efficiency savings such as:

- low implementation and support costs for the relevant STORM force;
- no requirement to re-train Computer Aided Despatch (CAD) operatives;
- significant reduction or even elimination of re-keying data;
- ability of forces to continue to use their existing systems without the need to consider national implementations.

Data exchange will also potentially assist in tackling Level 2 cross-border criminality by allowing forces to share both command-and-control and intelligence information.

- 8.50** In August 2005, Staffordshire Police and Essex Police became the first forces in the UK to deploy Steria's incident transfer system to transfer incidents between forces.

#### SUGGESTION N

Forces should take full advantage of the advances in technology to assist in providing more resilient services by entering into collaborative agreements to transfer incidents, intelligence and other information.

#### SUGGESTION P

Forces should consider collaborating with each other when procuring technological solutions in order to attract savings associated with bulk purchases. For example, the current STORM user group have a collaborative arrangement whereby the 18 forces involved contribute £5,000 per annum. This is used to fund ongoing development work from which all forces benefit.

<sup>35</sup> The Bichard Inquiry report, 2004.

### E-policing

- 8.51** In April 2000, the Government published its e-government strategy in which it set out its commitment to make better use of information technology in delivering new ways to provide public services which focused on the individual. There are a number of areas where online reporting, most obviously via the internet, would potentially impact directly in taking a significant number of telephone calls away from the contact management centre. These could include provision of general information through FAQs, online reporting of incidents, inter-agency co-operation and partnership working, crime prevention initiatives and updating of incidents through the use of personal identification numbers to link to individual files.
- 8.52** The Police Portal ([www.police.uk](http://www.police.uk)) has been developed as part of a wider e-policing strategy to provide national service delivery and integrated communication channels between the police and public. This functionality includes:
- online citizen reporting of non-urgent and hate crime;
  - interactive voice response telephony;
  - outbound auto-dialler telephone messaging;
  - text-to-speech;
  - textual analysis;
  - SMS text messaging;
  - Medium Message Service (MMS) (images, audio, text, video and combinations of these);
  - email; and
  - fully functional websites.
- 8.53** The police message broadcasting capability – which includes the SMS, MMS, and email service – is scaled to deal with major national incidents in a reliable and totally safe environment. This protects the content and deployment of messages during times of extreme tension and public uncertainty. It is also sufficiently flexible and easy to use for it to be deployed in all aspects of day-to-day policing, from neighbourhood watch bulletins to street crime and missing persons.
- 8.54** Police message broadcasting has proved successful as an alerting and informing system as well as an intelligence gathering tool. Members of the public are able to upload intelligence reports direct to the investigating team via the portal, together with moving or still images from their mobile phones. This is all in a secure, robust and accredited environment that protects the evidential quality of information and witness details.
- 8.55** The portal was deployed successfully in the aftermath of the London bombings of July 2005 to provide a highly secure and resilient mechanism that attracted extremely high numbers of visitors, thus reducing the potential impact on call handling and the IT infrastructure of police forces in London.

### CONCLUSION

- 8.56** Many commercial contact centres do not use their technology to its full capacity and therefore are not benefiting from the full potential inherent in their IT environment. The police service is no different. Evidence from a number of forces indicates that poorly scoped projects are not realising the benefits from the technologies installed and implemented, such as gaining the full range of management information and learning lessons for the future.
- 8.57** Police contact centres are constrained by capital and operational budget limitations and are not yet able to deliver optimal customer value. They find it difficult to get wider organisational buy-in for further investment and the focus remains on 'doing more for less'.



## 9. Using information to improve performance



## 9. Using information to improve performance

### INTRODUCTION

- 9.1 Continuous improvement in performance is an essential driver for organisations in both the private and public sectors. Contact management benefits from the widespread use of IT and IT-generated management data, often in real time. On the debit side, data and analysis rarely seem available in a truly comparable format in the public sector, often because of incompatible IT solutions being deployed. Both public and private sectors require an effective performance management framework to:
- better link activity to strategic aims and objectives;
  - monitor progress and performance against such objectives; and
  - identify barriers and good practice.
- 9.2 In contact management, one of the most important strands of performance information relates to the volume of customer contacts and the availability of resources to deal with the demand. Achieving the most cost-effective balance between demand and resources requires:
- a measurement of workload and performance; and
  - matching resources to demand.

### A. MEASURING WORKLOAD AND PERFORMANCE

#### WHAT SHOULD 'GOOD' PERFORMANCE LOOK LIKE?

- 9.3 For effective performance management, a force would need to have:
- an embedded performance management framework across the force within which contact management features as a specific area of scrutiny;
  - ***regular reviews of contact centre services and processes***; and
  - a structured process for using performance information and good practice to improve service delivery.

(Note: The element highlighted in bold italics represents an issue already included, either in full or in part, in the NCHS.)

#### WHAT IS COMMERCIAL GOOD PRACTICE?

- 9.4 The contact centre industry has traditionally been known for its mass production model and its efficiency targets. In the early days of call centres there were no set measurement standards, but there were some common performance metrics that have been recognised and used across the industry. The most commonly used measures included:
- call duration;
  - wrap-up time (the time spent completing work associated with a call after the caller has hung up);
  - percentage of agent capacity used in talking to the customer;
  - number of calls answered per agent; and
  - a widely accepted service level of answering 80 per cent of calls within 20 seconds.

- 9.5 Currently, part of the industry is moving away from these more traditional input measures to outcome measures, such as first-time call resolution and the quality of the interaction with the customer. Although this customer and quality focus is not universally adopted, it is increasingly accepted that customer satisfaction ultimately defines the level of success a business can enjoy. The emphasis is more on the *quality* of the interaction and its outcome as opposed to efficiency measures such as the *quantity* of calls handled.
- 9.6 Current industry thinking is perhaps best illustrated by Merchants *Global contact centre benchmarking report* (2005) which studied over 166 contact centres in over 24 countries. The report concludes that some of the old metrics are still relevant but should not be used in isolation. It recommends their use is combined with 'best practice levels' to provide a better contribution to business decisions (Figure 14).

**FIGURE 14: BEST PRACTICE SERVICE LEVELS**

Efficiency-based performance metrics	Recommended best practice level
Percentage of calls answered	90% of calls answered within 10 seconds
Average speed of answer	Average of 30 seconds
Abandoned rate	Less than 5%

Source: Merchants, *Global contact centre benchmarking report*, 2005

- 9.7 The report highlights the difficulty in defining universal best practice standards within a landscape of multi-functional, multi-channel operations with service delivery models tailored to specific customer markets. However, it identifies some common customer expectations, namely:
- Calls should be answered as quickly as possible.
  - The organisation should be up-to-date with their current situation in terms of personal details, circumstances and previous contact.
  - Their enquiry should be resolved or transaction completed as quickly as possible, and ideally the first time they make contact with the organisation.
  - Any agreement made about transactions or timescales should be honoured.
  - They should be kept up-to-date and informed of progress if the issue is not resolved at initial contact.
  - Any information given should be captured accurately.
  - The agent handling their call should take full responsibility and represent the organisation in any transaction.
  - They should receive an appropriate level of care and concern from the agent.
- 9.8 Certainly, an increasing number of the most successful companies now have greater regard for qualitative measures based around customer experience.
- 9.9 An alternative approach to customer focus is being taken by companies applying the 'systems thinking' style of management. In effect, this concentrates on tapping into the experience and knowledge of frontline staff to design the systems most suited to the customers with whom they have the greatest interface. Again, this exhibits a more qualitative approach based on customer experience.

- 9.10 In 1982 the Ford Motor Company was experiencing fierce competition from Toyota, which was producing better-quality vehicles at lower cost. Toyota realised that people wanted choice and implemented a system whereby the customer orders dictated the production flow. Nothing was made without an order and customers received the car they wanted within days. The problem was how to meet demand at mass-production prices.
- 9.11 The philosophy behind the Toyota thinking is that each person's work is connected to customer needs. In command and control organisations the use of budget-based measures introduces variation, making performance less stable, resulting in variation in the ability to service customers.

### HOW GOOD IS CURRENT POLICE PERFORMANCE?

- 9.12 Within policing, the emphasis until recently has been firmly on quantitative measures and targets. A central plank of the Police Reform Programme, the drive for robust performance measurement has seen the establishment of:
- the Policing Performance Assessment Framework (PPAF);
  - the iQuanta performance monitoring system (an internet analysis tool developed by the Police Standards Unit capable of distilling the information that is collected and producing charts and other outputs which help to track performance on a regular basis); and
  - the jointly sponsored *Managing police performance: a practical guide to performance management* (2004)<sup>36</sup>.
- 9.13 Contact management has not featured prominently within this national landscape of measures. In PPAF, the only relevant measure is part of 'user satisfaction' generally, within the Citizen Focus policing domain, SPI 1a:

**“Satisfaction of victims of domestic burglary, violent crime, vehicle crime and road traffic collisions with respect to making contact with the police.”**

- 9.14 This measure looks only at victim contact, and then only within certain categories<sup>37</sup>. The data collected centrally cannot be separated into the different types of contact medium (for example, telephone, email, fax, personal call to station or face-to-face). In 2004/05, satisfaction ratings ranged from 81.7 per cent to 95.7 per cent. In the British Crime Survey, questions are asked of respondents who have been victims of crime as to what method they used to contact police and how satisfied they were with the response. Unfortunately, the data from these questions are not routinely analysed, nor are the results published, because of the limited sample sizes.
- 9.15 One area where call management has featured more obviously is within HMIC's Baseline Assessment, which complements the statutory performance indicators by providing a qualitative measurement of police performance. Call management is one of the 27 key policing frameworks and has one relevant indicator, namely the percentage of 999 calls answered within locally set target times. Performance in 2004/05 varied between 73.4 per cent and 96.5 per cent (see Appendix F).

<sup>36</sup> Produced by PSU, Home Office, ACPO, APA, HMIC and Superintendent's Association of England and Wales ([www.policereform.gov.uk/psu](http://www.policereform.gov.uk/psu)).

<sup>37</sup> The categories will be expanded to include persons reporting anti-social behaviour for 2006/07.

- 9.16 Police contact centres represent a significant element of policing activity in England and Wales, handling over 42 million calls in 2004, of which around 9.5 million were 999 calls. While the two existing national measures cover important aspects of contact management, non-emergency calls form the bulk of the workload and there are no nationally available comparable statistics to cover performance in respect of these calls<sup>38</sup>.
- 9.17 Even in the areas where measures exist, all is not as it appears in the statistics. One surprising area of poor police performance is identified by BT. BT applies a service level to the handling of 999 calls (to answer 95 per cent in five seconds). While their operators might then expect police call handlers to be equally rapid in picking up the diverted 999 calls, they report that many calls queue for two minutes or longer before being answered by the recipient force.
- 9.18 The most common target for 999 calls is to answer 90 per cent within ten seconds – as confirmed within the NCHS. Over the period of a year, or a month or even a day, most forces can and do achieve this target. However, cumulative totals and percentages hide fluctuations within the day or shift that can see significant numbers of calls waiting well in excess of ten seconds.
- 9.19 BT statistics for the 12 months to June 2005 reveal that ten forces in England and Wales consistently failed to meet their two-minute target for answering 999 calls transferred by BT to the recipient force. This accounted for over 33,000 calls in that period. BT only highlights those forces which fail to answer in excess of fifty 999 calls per month within two minutes and, hence, the true scale of these failures across all forces will be higher. In highlighting this issue, BT made recent contact with a force to check on a live problem where calls were taking more than three minutes to be answered. It reported that the shift supervisor dismissed the importance of the problem, explaining that this was due merely to a shift change. In that supervisor's opinion, three minutes was apparently not an excessive time for 999 callers to wait.
- 9.20 The delay in taking individual 999 calls from the service provider currently represents an unseen failure of service that needs to be made visible to management. BT provides all forces individually with their current performance against the two-minute standard. In establishing the existing NCHS, the underlying aim was to keep abandoned calls (generally) below five per cent and emergency call failure rates below two per cent. The following recommendation is based on this principle.

**RECOMMENDATION 15**

An additional service level should be introduced within National Call Handling Standards of answering 98 per cent of all 999 calls from the service provider within two minutes.

- 9.21 To assist in meeting 999 response times in peak periods, some forces have introduced a system whereby another force takes calls on their behalf when call volumes are high. Seven forces currently report using this 'buddying' system to maximise resource usage between forces, meet demand and increase customer accessibility.

<sup>38</sup> Current categories are domestic burglary, vehicle crime, violent crime, racist incidents and road traffic collisions. The categories will be expanded to include persons reporting anti-social behaviour for 2006/07.

### RECOMMENDATION 16

All forces should implement a collaborative process whereby another force, or forces, agrees to take 999 calls on their behalf when high demand is experienced. Clear policies and procedures are required to ensure consistency of approach and appropriate safeguards to service.

9.22 The current gap in appropriate measures relates to the bulk of contact centre work, namely non-emergency calls. The NCHS proposes two primary measures in this regard, namely:

- to answer 90 per cent of calls within 30 seconds (40 seconds for 'one stop shop' centres); and
- to transfer 90 per cent of non-999 calls identified as emergencies within 10 seconds.

9.23 In addition, the NCHS suggests individual forces might wish to examine a range of other measures (in excess of 20) but leaves each to select those they regard as important. HMIC believes that there are a number of these suggested measures that should be standard and considered for national collection and comparison. These include:

#### internal

- percentage of staff satisfied with overall working conditions;
- sickness levels;
- staff turnover rates; and
- total abstraction rate.

#### external

- customer satisfaction levels (beyond victims of specific categories of crime);
- abandoned call rates (both 999 and non-emergency); and
- number of complaints.

9.24 The primary service standards for 999 and non-999 call answering are pitched to achieve an overall abandoned call rate that should not exceed two per cent and five per cent respectively. Measuring the actual rates for abandoned calls on initial receipt, and when transferring them, represents a key measure of quality of service to the public.

9.25 In addition, it would be useful to reopen earlier debate prompted by the NCHS working group as to the relative value of service level targets and average answering speeds. HMIC contends that both have a place within any basket of measures.

### RECOMMENDATION 17

The national forum (see Recommendation 3) should, as an early action, agree a suite of measures to be introduced nationally to reflect the important elements of both emergency and non-emergency call management.

## B. MATCHING RESOURCES TO DEMAND

### WHAT SHOULD 'GOOD' PERFORMANCE LOOK LIKE?

- 9.26 To manage demand effectively, a force would need to have:
- a demand management strategy to meet both business and customer needs, forecasting demand and using business planning to inform budget setting; and
  - an effective marketing and communication strategy to influence and where appropriate reduce demand.

### WHAT IS COMMERCIAL GOOD PRACTICE?

#### Demand management

- 9.27 Demand management is key to ensuring that customers' expectations are met and that they are satisfied with the service they receive. There are two broad types of demand on any contact centre: value demand (calls relevant to the organisation) and non-value demand (calls that are not relevant). The latter tend to be generated through a failure in processes. Staff can manage expectations by informing the caller what will happen next. Failure to manage expectations or to keep callers updated, or not doing something a caller has been promised or anticipated, can result in further calls to the police and creates extra work. (See the good practice case study below.)

**“In the financial services sector I have found failure demand (non-value demand) to run from 20 to 45 per cent of demand. In police forces, telecommunications and local authorities I have found failure demand to run as high as 50 to 80 per cent. In service organisations failure demand is often the greatest source of waste.”**

*Freedom from command and control: a better way to make the work work,*  
John Seddon (2003)

#### GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY: CUSTOMER SATISFACTION UNIT

Hampshire Constabulary has introduced a customer satisfaction unit. Staff in the unit review all incidents which require a non-immediate response, call the enquirer back to see if the situation is still the same, reassess the need to send a patrol and inform the caller of any ongoing local initiatives. In some cases they resolve the situation over the telephone. Hampshire reports that they have reduced the number of incidents that require a patrol to attend by 1,500 in just one month.

- 9.28 Through measurement and analysis of call types and sources, it is possible to identify opportunities to reduce non-value demand by diverting or otherwise answering the callers' queries. Fujifilm reduced its email volumes to its call centres by 60 per cent by providing direct access to answers of FAQs. A similar approach by Sony, to field questions about its Playstation, meant that over 85 per cent of online queries were answered automatically.

- 9.29** Primary call handling is defined as all contact that is made and dealt with through the force's contact management centre, whether through switchboard or a 'one stop shop' approach. Secondary call handling is defined as all calls that are dealt with outside of the contact centre, at individual extensions, departments and BCUs. The management of secondary call handling is an important feature of demand management. Some forces have appointed staff on division and in departments as single points of contact for secondary call management. Together with clear voicemail policies and management information on individual extensions, this can reduce the number of repeat calls and overall demand.
- 9.30** Another key area is matching staff to demand profiles, such as by time of day or days of week. The appropriate staffing level at peak periods reduces abandoned call rates, removes the need to rely on overtime, ensures that predictable staff absences are catered for and facilitates staff briefings, training and development. It also has a positive impact in achieving a better work-life balance for staff and allows more customers to get through first time. Technology such as 'workforce management' and 'call centre calculators' can support resource planning, forecasting and calculation of minimum staffing requirements. Such calculators can be found free of charge on the internet. An even simpler option is to use an Excel spreadsheet.

### Marketing and communication

- 9.31** Effective marketing and communication can significantly reduce the demand placed on contact centres. In 2004, BT identified that a high proportion of all calls to its contact centre were from customers checking on engineer arrival times. By instigating a structured programme of advanced calls to customers, announcing the engineer's arrival within 30 minutes, the incoming call volume was halved and callers' satisfaction levels improved.

### SUGGESTION R

If a force is using an Excel spreadsheet to calculate required staffing levels, then the calculation should be based on Erlang C, which is a well known calculation model that is used to forecast demand. It accurately calculates the amount of staff required against forecasted demand patterns, and it has been successfully used in public and private contact centres for many years.

### HOW GOOD IS CURRENT POLICE PERFORMANCE?

#### Demand management

- 9.32** In policing, the use of spreadsheets to predict demand and required staffing levels is widespread. However, some systems are more accurate and effective than others. Research and experience have shown that a spreadsheet based on Erlang C, an algorithm for calculating and forecasting call demand in order to set parameters for staffing levels, is perhaps the most effective (see the good practice case study below).

#### GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY: DEMAND MANAGEMENT GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

The Home Office Police Standards Unit, in conjunction with Symbia consultancy, has published a good practice guide to improving demand management. It includes a spreadsheet based on Erlang C and assists forces to design and develop a minimum operator requirement model. This document is available at: [www.policereform.gov.uk/psu/index.html](http://www.policereform.gov.uk/psu/index.html)

- 9.33** Some 30 per cent of forces have opted to use computerised workforce management systems (see the good practice case study below). These systems can be costly and require resource support to use them to their full potential. They can, however, provide a good return on investment and have improved performance by forecasting staff requirement against demand, thus reducing abandoned call rates and increasing public accessibility.

**GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY: WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT**

West Midlands Police uses the GMT Planet workforce management system to match resource to demand. It is currently achieving a service level of around 96 per cent on both emergency and non-emergency calls and, more importantly, the abandoned call rate is less than four per cent.

- 9.34 It is unusual within policing generally to be able to predict demand accurately, but contact management is one business area where relatively scientific prediction of demand, and therefore setting of staffing levels, is routinely available. The commercial world invests heavily in this process and regards it as being basic to cost-effective contact centre management. Surprisingly, only 48 per cent of forces currently employ resource planners and analysts specifically for the call management function.
- 9.35 Of equal concern are the examples of forces applying predictive modelling but then failing to convert the findings into actual staffing levels. One force cited cuts in the overall force budget as the main reason for suspension of recruitment and deviation from the identified model. The impact of not staffing to predicted staff requirement has resulted in some forces spending millions of pounds in overtime. Conversely, there are also examples of forces choosing to resource above the recommended staffing levels for particular periods.

**“I would recommend that any new contact centre should look to overstaff, if possible, from the outset and pare down in gradual steps. As a note of caution, I would not use a minimum, or below minimum, staffing level as the impact of trying to recover from this is time consuming, expensive and has a massive negative impact on customer expectations and perceptions.”**

DAC Ron MacPherson, Metropolitan Police

- 9.36 Several fieldwork forces reinforced the latter point by reporting they had to increase staffing levels after underestimating the initial requirements.
- 9.37 There is an abundance of data available to forces in addition to a tried-and-tested range of modelling techniques. Within this environment, there simply is no legitimate excuse for failing to apply a scientific approach to demand and workforce modelling. Demand management within the police contact centre environment in the UK is still in its early development and only five per cent of forces currently have a demand management strategy.

**RECOMMENDATION 18**

All forces should have a demand management strategy and employ demand forecasting and resource planning models linked to that strategy and to the budget setting process.

### Marketing and communication

- 9.38** Within policing, some 69 per cent of forces have a specific media and marketing plan for their contact centres. Any media and marketing plan should be designed around customer needs, incorporating mechanisms that give customers choice on how to access the service. For example, all forces have a DDI facility on their telephony system – by publishing these numbers and actively marketing the facility, calls can be diverted away from the main switchboard and give customers the access to individuals and specialist departments. (See the good practice case study below.)

#### SUGGESTIONS

To make effective use of the system, all DDI extensions should have a voicemail facility to manage customer contact. The policies and management of the voicemail system impact greatly on overall demand management.

#### GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY: USE OF DDI

Staffordshire Police has increased the use of DDI from 38 per cent to 57 per cent by marketing its use through BT telephone pages, advertising on the website, the use of business cards and proactively contacting the customers who most often use the service and giving them the DDI, where appropriate. For example, a firm of solicitors was a frequent caller, mostly needing to contact the custody block. Giving the custody DDI significantly reduced the volume of calls. For the first time more callers now use DDI to access the service than the force non-emergency number.

- 9.39** Another option for demand reduction is the FAQ database offered by the Police National Legal Database in conjunction with the NCHS project. This facility is available on the internet for police and public use ([www.askthe.police.uk](http://www.askthe.police.uk)).
- 9.40** There is still a degree of genuine misunderstanding by the general public on what constitutes an emergency call, as well as continued general abuse of the 999 system. Forces have reported that 70 per cent or more of 999 calls received are not classed as an emergency (they do not require an immediate response), and of these calls 40 per cent are an abuse of the system. Educating the public on how to access the police service and what services it can provide is an important part of managing demand. Some forces have been successful in implementing 999 campaigns and reducing misuse and abuse. This has been achieved by analysing the type of misuse and then using the results to target the issues identified and prosecute persistent abusers, thereby releasing more call handlers to answer genuine 999 calls. (See the good practice case study below.)

#### GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY: 999 ABUSE CAMPAIGN

Humberside Police is part of a new regional forum which is currently developing a 999 misuse campaign, using demand analysis to target abusers of the system. Collaboration is aimed at reducing the overall costs of the campaign for individual forces and spreading its impact throughout the region.

**RECOMMENDATION 19**

There should be a targeted public education programme that uses demand analysis to identify areas for improvement, specifically around the use and misuse of the 999 emergency system. The programme should incorporate specific measures and targets and have an evaluation plan to measure the impact.

9.41 The Quality of Service Commitment (QoS), which forces must implement by November 2006, includes commitments to make it clear how and when to contact the police. Taking action on the elements relevant to contact management will help forces deliver on their QoS commitments and performance delivery. The document states that forces shall:

- "provide equality of access to services and information
- provide a range of ways to access our services that address the needs of user
- consult with those who use our services and the local community about what is important to them and publish specific local commitments
- provide a range of information that focuses on areas of service that you have told us are important to you, ensuring the information is easy to understand
- widely publicise the details of how you can access police services in your local area.

This will include:

- the location and opening times of police stations and other contact points
- other ways that you can contact us or obtain advice and information, such as web sites, surgeries or public meetings
- the name of the officer who is responsible for policing in your area
- when you should call 999 for emergencies
- the arrangements for contacting the police for non-emergencies
- the arrangements for how to report a crime or incident."

**CONCLUSION**

9.42 While contact centres generate an abundance of performance and workload statistics, the incompatibility of individual force systems and their differing approaches have resulted in very little comparative performance information. As a result, the opportunity to achieve improvements through benchmarking is wholly absent.

9.43 There is also a dearth of good demand management approaches, despite the wide availability of relevant systems and software. This is an unacceptable situation given the importance of the function and the level of resources deployed. There is a clear need to establish a suite of nationally agreed and comparable performance measures that, together, reflect the breadth of the function and target the most important elements of the service delivery.



## 10. National standards and good practice



## 10. National standards and good practice

### INTRODUCTION

- 10.1 Independence and local accountability are central tenets of the tripartite structure of policing in the UK. The Home Office and police authorities each have roles to play in ensuring efficiency and effectiveness, but the key statutory responsibility for delivery of operational results rests with individual chief constables. While this is a strength in seeking to reflect local policing requirements and minimise unnecessary political influence, it can be a barrier to full adoption of national standards and the spread of good practice. Traditionally, 'standards' have been agreed by national representative bodies, such as APA and ACPO, but implementation and/or compliance has been largely regarded as 'operational' and therefore in the hands of chief constables. Compliance has in effect been voluntary and, as a result, the achievement of such standards has been patchy, dependent on the priority given by individual chief officers.
- 10.2 Good illustrations of this were data quality and timeliness standards for entry of arrest/summons reports and case results onto the PNC. Despite having clear standards written and agreed by ACPO, and officially being signed up to by every chief constable in the Chief Constables' Council, HMIC (in its thematic inspection of PNC's Data quality and Timeliness in 2001) found that not one force in England and Wales was meeting both standards – and only a handful were meeting either. It took almost two years of intensive work by HMIC to achieve a turnaround in performance, driven by the establishment of an enhanced compliance audit team, a robust self-assessment protocol, a programme of regular inspection and the introduction of a national Code of Practice under the Police Reform Act 2002.
- 10.3 The emergence of PPAF, the National Centre for Policing Excellence, Baseline Assessment and, in particular, codes of practice have helped to focus chief constables on the importance of meeting national standards. Criticisms in a succession of high-profile reports, such as the Bichard Inquiry, have also generated a greater willingness to look at areas of service delivery that had previously been ignored, such as contact management.

### The National Call Handling Standards (NCHS)

- 10.4 Between 1999 and 2001 an ACPO-led working group produced a national call handling strategy, supported by standards. The impetus for this work was provided by the intended introduction of a police-only national non-emergency telephone number. A significant project was established and funded by the Home Office and a group of pilot forces were identified. In 2001, however, the incumbent Home Secretary changed the focus by seeking to make the non-emergency number a wider service, including other emergency and public services, and the project stalled.

- 10.5** The ACPO Information Management Committee decided to continue with the work on standards and led a working group with membership from key stakeholder groups, including APA, Home Office and HMIC. The resultant NCHS were published in April 2005 comprising a Framework for Best Practice and a set of diagnostic performance measures. The framework is designed around the following business drivers:
- putting your customer first;
  - getting the business culture right;
  - developing effective strategy and organisational structure;
  - investing in people development;
  - ensuring continuing professional and skills development; and
  - making best use of management information.
- 10.6** The standards take the form of a framework of statements of intent. For example under 'putting the customer first' there are four standards:
1. ensuring a process is in place to regularly consult customers and use the results to improve services;
  2. keeping them informed with relevant and timely information in relation to reported incidents or enquiries;
  3. monitoring complaints and positive feedback to resolve repeat problems and identify best practice; and
  4. providing customers with regular information on services provided and standards to better manage demand and customer expectations.
- 10.7** The NCHS were endorsed by Chief Constables' Council, and chief constables have resolved to achieve the standards in all forces by April 2006. Six forces have volunteered to be 'pilot' forces for achievement of the standards, and it is intended that their progress will be reviewed in October 2005.
- 10.8** The work completed to date by the working group is commendable, in particular after the initial funding was removed. ACPO has received support from the Police Standards Unit (PSU) and the British Association of Public Communication Officers (BAPCO) in taking forward the production of the standards and exploration of accredited training for contact centre staff. It is noted that both strands of work have limited capacity to deliver anything beyond the basic products, and the part-time project management is likely to be strictly time-limited.
- 10.9** To contribute to the direction of travel of the NCHS, this inspection has examined the current statements of intent and has identified further 'standards' in each of the six original business driver categories, based on the research and good practice from both private sector and police operations. In addition, proposals have been added for similar standards under the two headings not in the NCHS: 'technology' and 'location and facilities'. All of these standards (including the originals within the NCHS) appear near the start of their respective chapters and are consolidated in Appendix G.
- 10.10** Furthermore, this report proposes an assessment matrix that fully complements the standards and sets out in greater detail what delivery of each standard would look like in reality. Each element of the matrix sets out a range of descriptions, 'scored' from two points to eight points, dependent on the degree of achievement of the standard. An example of the matrix is set out overleaf, in Figure 15.

**FIGURE 15: AN EXAMPLE FROM THE SELF-ASSESSMENT MATRIX**

### 1.2 PLACING CUSTOMER FEEDBACK AND SATISFACTION AT THE CENTRE OF ORGANISATIONAL THINKING

2	4	6	8
Limited customer satisfaction information is available.	Regular surveys are used to understand customer satisfaction. A structured process of gathering data on customer satisfaction is in place and there is strong evidence of action based on findings.	Satisfaction measures are an embedded part of individual and organisational measures and improvement plans.	Customer feedback is at the centre of organisational thinking and recognition mechanisms.

#### **SUGGESTION T**

The self-assessment matrix can be used by forces to health-check established contact centre performance or to help with the implementation of new or developing centres.

- 10.11** The expanded standards and corresponding matrix appear in full in Appendix G. It has been designed to assist forces in making a self-assessment of their progress against the standards as well as representing a core tool within any focused or detailed inspection of a force's contact management facility or function. It is also proposed that the standards will form the basis of the grading criteria for the 2005/06 Baseline Assessment of forces in the area of call management.
- 10.12** HMIC contends that without the harder edge provided by this assessment matrix the standards framework will be open to wide-ranging local interpretation and any evaluation of achievement or progress against the high-level standards will defy comparison across forces – an essential element in raising overall service standards. Its incorporation within the next round of Baseline Assessment will allow HMIC and the service, in particular ACPO, to agree the most important areas within the standards and agree what success looks like in advance of the assessment taking place.
- 10.13** It will be important, in view of the number of standards now included, that some work is commissioned to identify which of the standards are the key ones for grading performance (for example technology may be more of a background enabler). Obvious options would include weighting of two or three standards within a particular area or indeed weighting of some business drivers over others.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 20**

ACPO should work with HMIC to further develop the standards and assessment framework and identify any relevant weighting of standards or drivers that should occur before grading forces' performance.

- 10.14** Having refined the assessment tool, it will be available to measure the progress against the chief constables' commitment and target date of April 2006. While experience and current progress suggest that few forces will reach the target, HMIC is not recommending at this time that consideration should be given to the introduction of a statutory Code of Practice, under the Police Reform Act 2002. However, HMIC reserves the right, subject to the assessment in April 2006, to review that position, in view of the importance of the subject area.

**RECOMMENDATION 21**

HMIC should carry out a national assessment of forces against the assessment matrix after April 2006 and review the need for a statutory Code of Practice in light of the results.

**GOOD PRACTICE**

- 10.15 Good practice has been highlighted throughout this report, both from the commercial sector and from police forces. It is consistently the case that there is no central focus for the collation and dissemination of this good practice, which leaves individual forces that are considering changes in their contact management approach or location of their facility to make contact with other forces on an ad hoc basis.
- 10.16 For the NCHS to remain valid and relevant, there is a need to consolidate emerging good practice and feed this, and new lessons learned from initiatives, into the content of the assessment matrix. While some interviewees express the view that HMIC should be the focal point for such consolidation, the more general view is that it is for the service itself to take on this role, either via the national professional forum, recommended earlier in this report, or through the emerging NPIA.

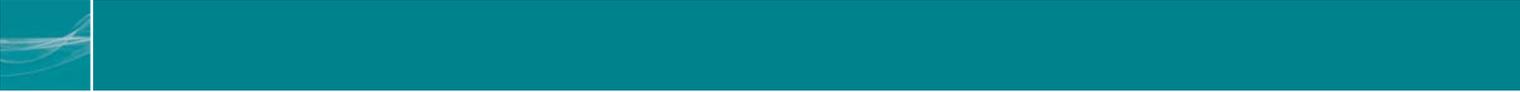
**CONCLUSION**

- 10.17 The service has real opportunity to build on the good work started in the NCHS to establish clear and unequivocal standards. This will mean little, however, unless there is a robust and challenging assessment framework that helps forces to drive up performance individually and collectively. The enhanced standards and assessment framework set out in Appendix G provides a genuine contribution to this endeavour.



# Appendices





## Appendix A

### Acknowledgements

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary, Kate Flannery, would like to place on record her gratitude for the assistance of the organisations, individuals and forces who contributed during this inspection.

Particular thanks are extended to the following people and companies who gave a considerable amount of their time and assistance during the inspection:

- Mr Martin Hill-Wilson (Datapoint);
- Merchants;
- Dimension Data;
- Stream International;
- Thomas Cook Signature;
- Steria;
- SAS;
- Siemens;
- KPMG;
- Mr Willem Elderenbosch (ISC Holland); and
- Northgate Solutions.

Their assistance has been greatly appreciated.

All forces in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland contributed to this inspection by completing the positional statement and questionnaire within a tight timescale. HMIC would especially like to express appreciation to those forces which agreed to be visited by the inspection team or whose representatives attended a focus group, details of which are included in Appendix C.

Thanks are extended to the following forces who provided photographs for use in this report:

- Kent;
- Lincolnshire;
- North Wales;
- Central Scotland;
- Staffordshire; and
- Lothian and Borders.



## Appendix B

### Recommendations matrix and suggestions

This matrix lists the recommendations stemming from the thematic inspection.

The matrix includes:

- the chapter and page number where the recommendation appears;
- the recommendation made;
- a suggested owner of the recommendation;
- the timescale within which the recommendation should be implemented; and
- the evaluation criteria by which to gauge progress against the recommendation.

No.	Chapter	Recommendation	Owner					Timescale
			Home Office	ACPO	APA	Chief Constables	HMIC	
1	Customer Page 24	All forces should develop a detailed, structured and timely process to capture the customer experience and satisfaction levels.				✓		Within 12 months
2	Customer Page 29	All forces should, as a minimum requirement, provide access to their service via standard telephony, internet, SMS text facilities, email, and the equivalent of minicom, talk-type and Language Line.				✓		Within 12 months
3	Business culture Page 36	A national tripartite forum should be established to drive the implementation of the NCHS, as enhanced by the findings of this inspection, and provide focus for consolidation and dissemination of good practice, policy and procedures.	✓	✓	✓			Within 3 months
4	Business culture Page 36	The tripartite forum should develop a centralised repository for good practice in contact centre management, which should be accessible to all forces and have established processes for ongoing review and update.	✓	✓	✓			Within 12 months
5	Strategy and structures Page 45	ACPO and APA should jointly develop a national contact management strategy with agreed milestones for implementation timescales. This strategy should provide the framework for the implementation of the NCHS, as enhanced by the findings of this inspection.		✓	✓			Within 6 months
6	Strategy and structures Page 47	All forces should have a contact management strategy which complements the national strategy, includes appropriate objectives and action plans which are regularly reviewed, and is championed by a nominated chief officer.				✓		Within 12 months

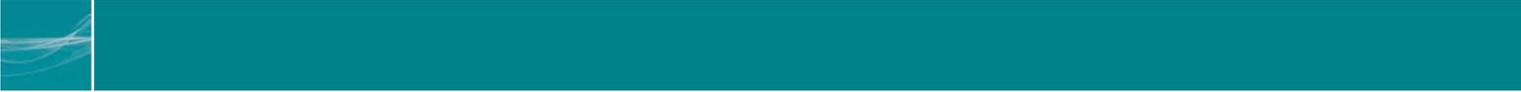
No.	Chapter	Recommendation	Owner					Timescale
			Home Office	ACPO	APA	Chief Constables	HMIC	
7	Strategy and structures Page 48	All forces should actively communicate the policies and practices underpinning the contact management strategy to staff to jointly improve service delivery, and to partners and the public to raise awareness and help manage expectation and demand.				✓		Within 12 months
8	Strategy and structures Page 49	All forces to take immediate action to ensure that comprehensive business continuity and disaster recovery plans are in place to enable service delivery of the contact management function to be maintained at all times. These plans should be tested annually and kept under constant review.				✓		Within 3 months
9	People Page 61	All forces should have a specific HR strategy for contact management that encourages a high level of involvement from HR specialists and incorporates the key issues that drive operational performance – effective resource planning to demand, a staff retention policy, succession planning and recruitment.				✓		Within 12 months
10	People Page 64	All forces should undertake regular staff surveys and exit interviews and use the results to form an action plan to improve the quality of services provided.				✓		Within 6 months
11	Skills and training Page 71	ACPO, on behalf of the Service, should establish an externally accredited National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) to provide a consistent approach to standards and training.	✓					Within 24 months
12	Skills and training Page 73	All forces should introduce a mentoring and tutoring process for new and existing staff to provide the support they require at a vital stage in their development and help improve their skills base which, in turn, will lead to a better service provision.				✓		Within 6 months

No.	Chapter	Recommendation	Owner					Timescale
			Home Office	ACPO	APA	Chief Constables	HMIC	
13	Location and facilities Page 81	The Home Office should produce an updated guide to the design of police control room and communications facilities, to include good practice and minimum specifications for the design and refurbishment of police contact centre accommodation.	✓					Within 24 months
14	Technology Page 90	All forces should introduce the EISEC software solution in 999 call management.				✓		Within 12 months
15	Performance information Page 101	An additional service level should be introduced within NCHS of answering 98 per cent of all 999 calls from the service provider within two minutes.	✓	✓	✓			Within 12 months locally Nationally accepted measure within 24 months
16	Performance information Page 102	All forces should implement a collaborative process whereby another force, or forces, agrees to take 999 calls on their behalf when high demand is experienced. Clear policies and procedures are required to ensure consistency of approach and appropriate safeguards to service.		✓		✓		Within 6 months
17	Performance information Page 102	The national forum (see Recommendation 3) should, as an early action, agree a suite of measures to be introduced nationally to reflect the important elements of both emergency and non-emergency call management.	✓	✓	✓			Agreement within 12 months for implementation within 24 months
18	Performance information Page 105	All forces should have a demand management strategy and employ demand forecasting and resource planning models linked to that strategy and to the budget setting process.				✓		Within 12 months

No.	Chapter	Recommendation	Owner					Timescale
			Home Office	ACPO	APA	Chief Constables	HMIC	
19	Performance information Page 107	There should be a targeted public education programme that uses demand analysis to identify areas for improvement, specifically around the use and misuse of the 999 emergency system. The programme should incorporate specific measures and targets and have an evaluation plan to measure the impact.	✓					Within 12 months
20	National standards Page 112	ACPO should work with HMIC to further develop the standards and assessment framework and identify any relevant weighting of standards or drivers that should occur before grading forces' performance.		✓			✓	Within 6–12 months
21	National standards Page 113	HMIC should carry out a national assessment of forces against the assessment matrix after April 2006 and review the need for a statutory Code of Practice in light of the results.					✓	By September 2006

Suggestion letter	Page number	Suggestion
A	25	Detailed, structured and timely contact centre customer satisfaction level results should be used to build performance indicators for improvement. Forces should then feed these results to staff to address issues identified and use them to improve performance where appropriate.
B	27	All forces should produce automatically generated confirmation messages to acknowledge the receipt of a text message. This should be publicised as part of a contact management communications strategy.
C	29	Forces should, through their Data Protection Officer, examine their processes to ensure that they are complying with the First Principle of the Data Protection Act 1998.
D	35	Representatives from BCUs and other departments should be included in appropriate contact centre management meetings in order to help develop a close understanding of each other's requirements, resolve issues of mutual concern and promote a culture of co-ordinated service delivery.
E	37	Forces should ensure that all contact centre staff are briefed at commencement of duty, either in person or by remote media. As well as delivering operational information, the opportunity should be used to convey corporate messages, recognise good work and reinforce the appropriate culture.
F	39	Forces should pursue joint training for contact centre staff with operational officers, in order to promote understanding and awareness of each other's roles and an appreciation of how each contributes to force performance.
G	62	All forces should treat business planning and forecasting as important for contact centre service delivery. Contact management centres should be provided with similar support to BCUs of equivalent size in respect of specialist roles such as dedicated human resource planners, analysts, and performance and quality assurance managers.
H	62	Good workforce planning linked to effective demand management supported by timely recruitment must be in place to avoid operating under authorised staffing levels and recruiting at peak demand or leave times.
J	63	All forces should ensure that when using police officers on restricted duties within the contact centre, those officers should go through formal selection processes and have the appropriate competencies, skills and training to carry out the function.

Suggestion letter	Page number	Suggestion
K	70	All forces should design and develop an appropriate induction package, together with basic training in contact centre management. All senior management promoted or appointed as head of the contact centre should have the necessary skills base prior to appointment within call management.
L	73	Forces should acknowledge the role the contact centre has to play in delivering customer service. In many cases the size of the department and its specialism suggests that it would benefit from having a dedicated team of trainers and appropriate training facilities for contact management staff.
M	81	Design and facilities of contact management centres should be included in discussions at the national police contact management forum. (See Chapter 3.)
N	93	Forces should take full advantage of the advances in technology to assist in providing more resilient services by entering into collaborative agreements to transfer incidents, intelligence and other information.
P	93	Forces should consider collaborating with each other when procuring technological solutions in order to attract savings associated with bulk purchases. For example, the current STORM user group have a collaborative arrangement whereby the 18 forces involved contribute £5,000 per annum. This is used to fund ongoing development work from which all forces benefit.
R	104	If a force is using an Excel spreadsheet to calculate required staffing levels, then the calculation should be based on Erlang C, which is a well known calculation model that is used to forecast demand. It accurately calculates the amount of staff required against forecasted demand patterns, and it has been successfully used in public and private contact centres for many years.
S	106	To make effective use of the system, all DDI extensions should have a voicemail facility to manage customer contact. The policies and management of the voicemail system impact greatly on overall demand management.
T	112	The self-assessment matrix can be used by forces to health-check established contact centre performance or to help with the implementation of new or developing centres.



## Appendix C

### Inspection methodology

An initial scoping study was carried out to examine practical options for maximising the effectiveness of police call handling and management in the United Kingdom. During this exercise a number of previously completed works, which gave recommendations of strategic vision and tactical options for the way forward, were considered. The recommendation from this phase was that a thematic inspection into call handling and management within the police service should be carried out in two phases, with the first phase focusing on contact management and the second on incident management.

An inspection team was formed for the first phase, led by Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary Kate Flannery, comprising Assistant Inspector of Constabulary Peter Todd, Pauline Smith, Contact Centre Manager Staffordshire Police, Superintendent Mike Horne (HMIC), Superintendent Chris Moon (HMIC) and Superintendent Neil MacSporran (HMIC Scotland)

A strategic reference group was established to advise on methodology and offer critiques of the emerging findings and draft report. Membership of this group was drawn from ACPO, ACPO(S), APA, Home Office, Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Superintendents' Association, the Police Federation, UNISON and the Audit Commission.

The next stage was to use the findings of the scoping study to design a questionnaire-based survey of all United Kingdom police forces. The questionnaire was designed around eight key business areas:

- customer;
- culture;
- strategy and organisational structure;
- human resources;
- skills, training and education;
- location and facilities;
- technology; and
- management information.

The key business areas were identified by the inspection team, in collaboration with members of the Home Office's Police Reform Unit, taking account of Citizen Focus Policing and the Quality of Service Commitment.

The aim of the questionnaire was to provide a positional statement relating to the key

business areas to determine which forces were performing well and identify good practice. The questionnaire was not designed to provide a statistical benchmarking of performance.

Every police force responded within three weeks, and the results of the analysis identified a number of forces suitable for the in-depth fieldwork phase.

A new initiative was adopted by the inspection team with the establishment of expert focus groups. These groups were drawn from key areas of business, including superintendents with managerial responsibility for communications, contact centre managers, BCU and divisional commanders, and force human resource and training experts. Similar meetings were held in Scotland. Meetings were also held with a number of technology suppliers to the police service to ascertain the current position and what is on the horizon in terms of new technology in the contact management field. A number of commercial contact centres and consultants provided very valuable insight and assistance in specific areas of business.

The fieldwork centred around visits to those forces identified in the questionnaire as performing well in one or more of the key business areas. A visit to the Netherlands Police Communications Centre in Rotterdam provided a European perspective to the inspection. A research protocol was developed to conduct the fieldwork robustly and consistently. A series of hypotheses was generated to structure the information collection and test the emerging findings of both the expert focus groups and fieldwork. The techniques used during the fieldwork were:

- interviews, consultation and meetings with ACPO and ACPO(S) officers;
- interviews with senior police officers in command of contact centres, contact centre managers, BCU and divisional commanders, contact centre supervisors and staff and operational staff.
- interviews with leading spokespersons within APA, Home Office, ACPO, ACPO(S), PSNI, experts and consultants in the contact management field and academics.

The findings of the inspection were underpinned by extensive research undertaken by the team, including a review of relevant Home Office research papers, ACPO papers and reports, numerous academic reports and other references identified from a literature review.

The backdrop to this thematic inspection has been a dynamic debate about how contact management within the police service can be improved to provide the communities it serves with world excellence in customer service and satisfaction. Throughout the inspection the team sought to link its work with this wider debate and the development of Home Office and ACPO policy on Citizen Focus and a Quality of Service Commitment.

## PARTICIPANTS

POLICE FORCES	NON-POLICE
<p>Northumbria Cleveland Humberside Gloucester Wiltshire Hampshire Merseyside GMP North Wales Cheshire Metropolitan City of London Avon and Somerset West Midlands Kent Lothian and Borders Tayside Central Scotland PSNI Netherlands Politie</p>	<p><b>Consultants</b> Dimension Data, South Africa Datapoint, Brentford Harding and Yorke (ERIC), Abingdon Call Centre Management Association (CCMA) European Conglomerate of Contact Centre Organisations (ECCCO) University of Strathclyde University of Stirling KPMG, London SAS, Marlow</p>
<p>All UK forces for their return of the thematic inspection questionnaire</p>	<p><b>IT</b> BT, Leeds and London Stratus AIT, London Siemens, Beeston Steria, Hemel Hempstead Northgate Solutions, Hemel Hempstead</p>
<p><b>THEMATIC INSPECTION REFERENCE GROUP</b> Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Association of Police Authorities Home Office Association of Chief Police Officers (England and Wales) Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland) Police Service of Northern Ireland UNISON Audit Commission Superintendents' Association Police Federation of England and Wales</p>	<p><b>Others</b> UNISON NHS Direct, Leeds Association of Police Authorities Home Office West Sussex Fire Service London Ambulance Service Audit Scotland Thomas Cook Signature, Peterborough Stream International, Derby Office of Deputy Prime Minister</p>

<p><b>FOCUS GROUPS: ENGLAND AND WALES</b></p> <p><b>Police staff contact centre managers</b></p> <p>North Yorkshire</p> <p>North Wales</p> <p>Hampshire</p> <p>Surrey</p> <p>Merseyside</p> <p>HMIC</p> <p><b>BCU commanders</b></p> <p>West Midlands</p> <p>Northumbria</p> <p>Nottingham</p> <p>Lincolnshire</p> <p>Staffordshire</p> <p><b>Police contact centre managers</b></p> <p>West Midlands</p> <p>Cleveland</p> <p>Merseyside</p> <p>Sussex</p> <p>Surrey</p> <p>Gloucestershire</p> <p><b>HR and training</b></p> <p>Kent</p> <p>Norfolk</p> <p>Leicestershire</p> <p>Suffolk</p> <p>Metropolitan</p>	<p><b>FOCUS GROUPS: SCOTLAND</b></p> <p><b>Police staff contact centre managers</b></p> <p>Central Scotland</p> <p>Strathclyde</p> <p>Tayside</p> <p>Fife</p> <p>Dumfries and Galloway</p> <p>Grampian</p> <p><b>Area/divisional commanders</b></p> <p>Strathclyde</p> <p>Central Scotland</p> <p>Lothian and Borders</p> <p>Tayside</p> <p>Northern</p> <p>Fife</p> <p>Dumfries and Galloway</p> <p>Grampian</p> <p><b>Police contact centre managers</b></p> <p>Strathclyde</p> <p>Central Scotland</p> <p>Lothian and Borders</p> <p>Tayside</p> <p>Grampian</p> <p>Fife</p> <p>Dumfries and Galloway</p> <p>Northern</p>
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## Appendix D

### Structural options and considerations

Chapter 4 identifies that a myriad of structural options for delivering contact management are used throughout the UK, ranging from one centralised contact centre to forces using up to 40 switchboards, often staffed by a single person in a rural police station. No firm conclusion has been reached as to which one structure is most effective, and this was reflected in the fact that the three forces graded Excellent in the Baseline Assessment 2004/05 each have very different structures. From all the structures examined, and based on HMIC questionnaire returns, four main models of police contact management have been identified. They are outlined below.

These models are not prescriptive, as there are many idiosyncrasies, and some forces may not consider that their structure fits completely into one model. While this inspection has not identified an ideal structure, each model has a number of advantages, disadvantages and critical success factors. Forces must choose the most appropriate structure to address the needs of their communities. Any of the models can be successful if:

- a clear strategy is in place;
- policies, practices and procedures are clearly defined and rigorously reinforced;
- staff are involved in their formulation; and
- this is clearly communicated throughout the force.

The existing culture, strategic direction of the force, demographic and geographic nature of the area and, of course, the prevailing financial situation, will all influence decisions as to the most appropriate structure to employ.

One of the possible variations within a model is whether or not calls are routed via a switchboard. Given the pivotal and developing role of switchboard operators, a key strategic decision taxing many forces is whether to pursue a 'one stop shop', where the first human intervention is the call-taker, who attempts to deal with the call without transferring it. Few forces have taken this step entirely.

The most commonly cited reason for not having a one-stop shop strategy is the difficulty in dealing with both long- and short-duration calls within one call centre. Several forces, including North Yorkshire (whose current structure is described in Chapter 4), have found that long calls, in particular those which lead to a crime report being recorded, block up the system. At times of high demand the majority of call handlers can be engaged on calls lasting between 10 and 20 minutes, making it impossible for other callers to get through. A switchboard can fulfil the useful function of filtering calls for extension transfers, for example, or for emergency calls reported on a non-emergency line which might otherwise become caught in a long queue.

It is very difficult to create a resourcing profile which can meet the demands of a one-stop shop strategy and still make cost-effective use of staff. To be able to meet service levels at times of high numbers of long duration calls (such as Monday mornings when, historically, the number of reports of crime is high) may mean that at other times during a shift staff are under-utilised.

When deciding which method to use to record crime, whether by a separate crime bureau or by general call-takers, forces should ensure that the function is appropriately resourced and account is taken of how demand will affect staffing levels. For example, communication centres where call handlers complete crime reports will need to take into account that completion of a crime report call takes on average 20 minutes, which is considerably longer than the average length of other calls. The number of call handlers will therefore have to be increased to meet demand. While there will be no need to employ staff to exclusively record crime details, variances in levels of pay and allowances may mean that this structure is ultimately more expensive.

Another strategic consideration is whether callers should be dealt with by specialists, such as the firearms licensing department, or by general call-takers. If it is to be the latter, there are training implications in helping call handlers answer specialist questions. Despite the practical difficulties, forces should not be put off exploring a one-stop shop approach if this fits with their strategy and culture. Certainly, only having to speak to one person to have their enquiry resolved will appeal to many members of the public.

#### CASE STUDY

North Wales Police is in the process of extending its one-stop shop approach, which currently does not include crime reporting, to the whole of the call management function by incorporating the present crime recording bureau into general call handling. Staff will be multi-skilled to handle any type of call, with the intention that as many people as possible will be dealt with at the first point of contact. Callers to the force are greeted by an automated bilingual response which provides the facility for those who know an extension number to dial it, thus reducing the number of calls which are passed to call-takers. Since the introduction of this strategy, public satisfaction with the ease of contacting the force has increased, and the number of calls transferred to other parts of the force by call handlers has fallen by 2.7 per cent.

A more typical result of removing the switchboard operator is illustrated by the next case study.

#### CASE STUDY

When centralising its communications function, Lincolnshire Police withdrew the force switchboard and introduced an auto-attendant system, whereby callers are presented with an automated menu of options. This ranged from inputting the direct dial extension number, if known, to pressing '1' to speak to a call handler. The change prompted a deluge of complaints from callers who did not wish to 'talk to a machine'. The response coincided with a significant downturn in both call handling performance and customer satisfaction. As a result, the call handling strategy was amended to reflect the force's emphasis on customer focus, and the switchboard was reintroduced. Not only did complaints significantly decrease but both customer satisfaction and quantifiable performance improved.

The Office of Information Communications Technology and the New South Wales Department of Commerce in Australia<sup>39</sup> identified the following important general issues that relate to choosing a configuration:

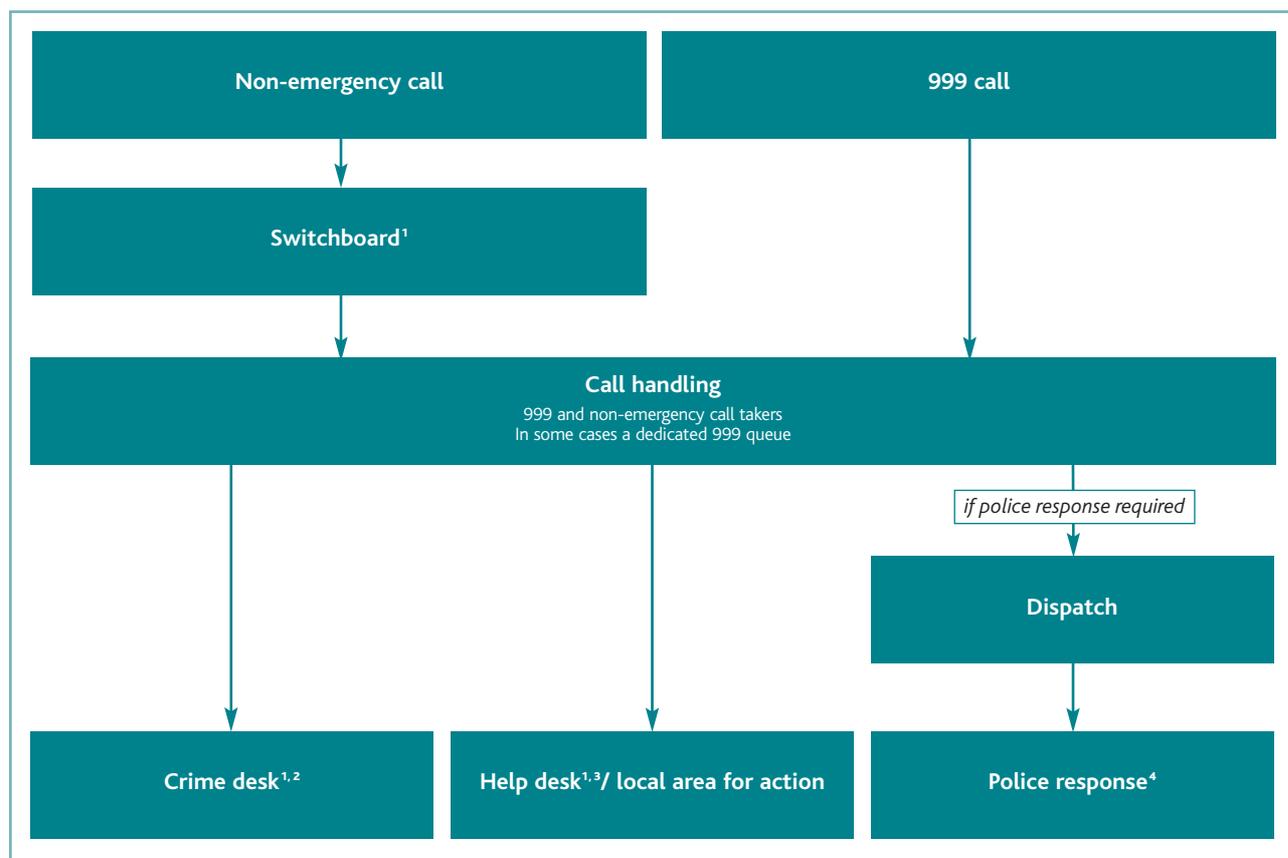
- Capital costs: costs generally will be higher with a decentralised and distributed configuration and lower in a centralised arrangement, since centralised operations allow significant economies of scale and capital utilisation.
- Culture change visibility: the introduction of a call centre will be much more visible in a centralised operation.
- Communication flows: internal communication will be much easier in a centralised call centre than in a decentralised option.
- Performance management: experience shows that it is much easier to maintain consistent service levels and performance standards in a centralised operation than in a decentralised one.
- Motivation and support dynamics: maintaining staff motivation and productivity is much easier in a centralised operation.
- Defined accountability: accountability is much more easily defined and maintained in a centralised operation. Lower levels of accountability are more common in decentralised operations.
- Staffing: a decentralised call centre may require the appointment of additional levels of team leaders.
- Expansion costs: expansion costs tend to be higher in a decentralised operation, because of the duplication of expansion costs. Often, the capacity to expand has not been factored into the overall planning process.
- Local response: a decentralised operation or distributed network can arguably respond more quickly to local regional issues than a centralised, universal operation.
- Backup site: the need for uninterrupted operation is an important consideration. If this is essential, multiple sites, such as those in decentralised or distributed call centre arrangements, may be the best configuration.

Descriptions of the four generic models begin on the next double-page spread, together with a number of advantages and disadvantages inherent with each structure.

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<sup>39</sup> The Office of Information Communications Technology, Australia, and the New South Wales Department of Commerce, *Call centre establishment guide* issue 10 May 2002.  
[www.oit.nsw.gov.au/Guidelines/4.3.5.a-CC-Establishment.asp](http://www.oit.nsw.gov.au/Guidelines/4.3.5.a-CC-Establishment.asp)

## MODEL 1: FORCE-LEVEL CENTRALISED CONTACT CENTRE ON A SINGLE SITE



<sup>1</sup>Only in place in some forces

<sup>2</sup>Deal with part of an attended incident (e.g. record crime and create crime report)

<sup>3</sup>Deal with non-attended incidents over the phone

<sup>4</sup>Officers attend the incident

Call-takers located at a centralised contact centre receive both 999 and non-emergency calls from anywhere in the force area. Operational decisions over call grading, resource allocation and dispatch are made within the centre. The function is managed centrally and associated policy decided at force level.

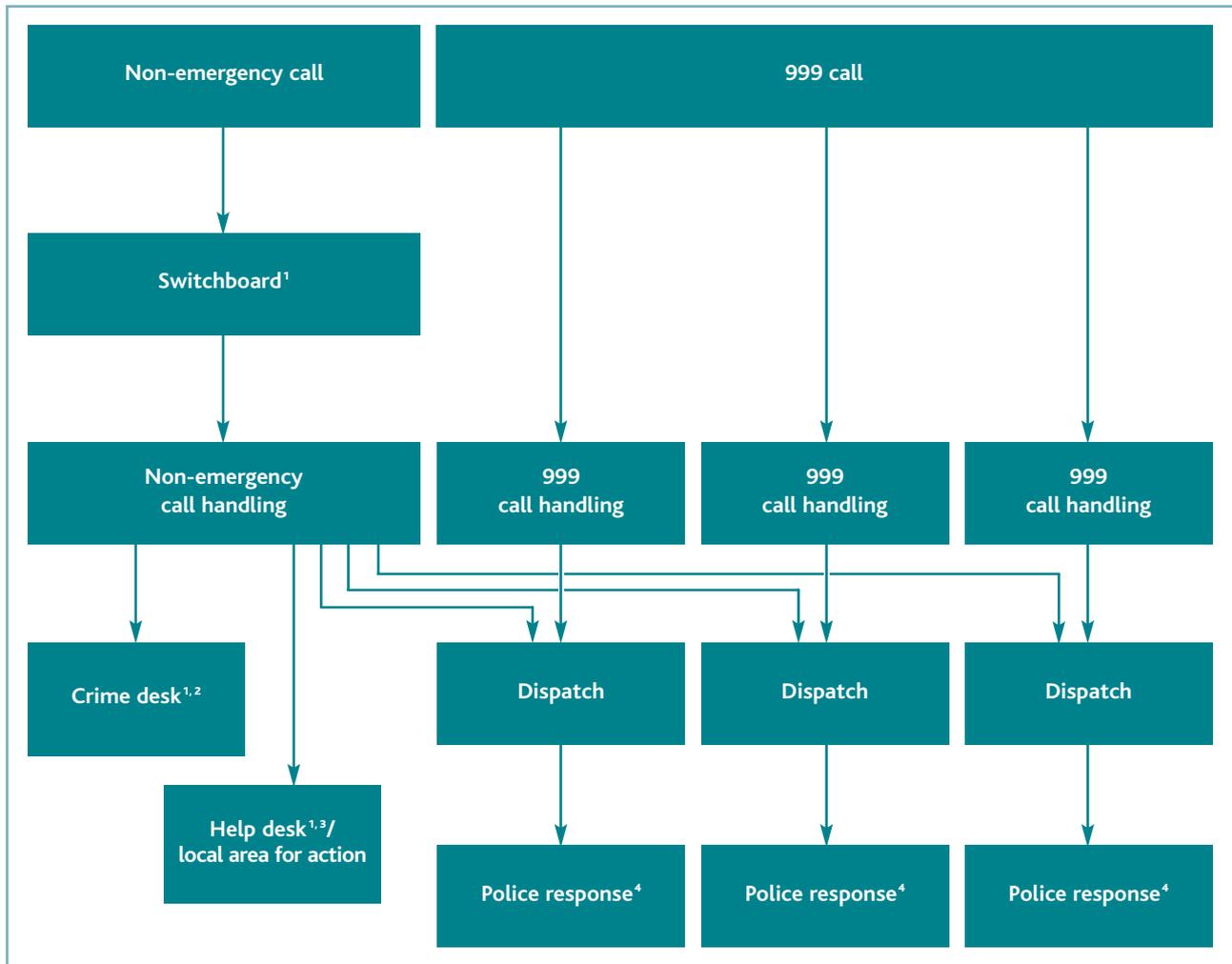
#### ADVANTAGES

- Corporate approach
- Economies of scale
- Standardised practices
- Central contact point
- Centralised management structure for whole process
- Enhanced supervision and management control
- Easier to manage culture
- Supports joint agency working
- Supports AIRWAVE
- Centralised training function possible

#### DISADVANTAGES

- Having one centralised site does not support business continuity
- Additional cost of fallback facilities
- No direct control for BCU commanders
- Does not promote local solutions to local problems
- Costs and disruption associated with staff moving to centralised site
- Increased workload for individual call handlers
- Potential loss of local knowledge
- Cultural resistance to call centres, perception of a 'mass production' model

## MODEL 2: TWO-TIER STRUCTURE



<sup>1</sup>Only in place in some forces

<sup>2</sup>Deal with part of an attended incident (e.g. record crime and create crime report)

<sup>3</sup>Deal with non-attended incidents over the phone

<sup>4</sup>Officers attend the incident

Calls are received at both force and area level. Usually, 999 calls are received and dealt with at force level and non-emergency calls locally. Management of the force-level service is usually by a centralised department, while locally-based staff are usually managed by BCUs.

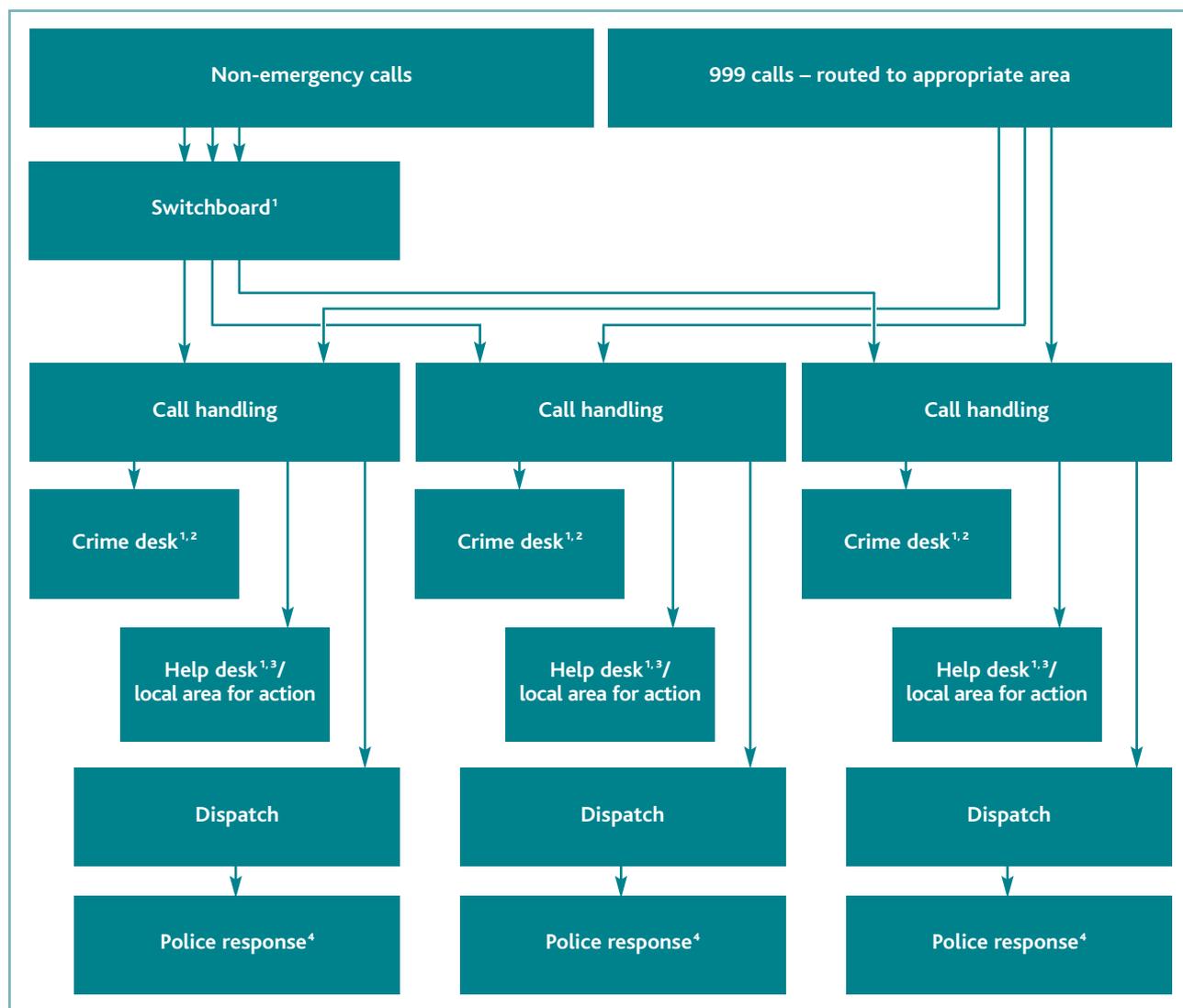
#### ADVANTAGES

- Promotes increased accountability for BCU commanders
- Allows greater flexibility in meeting local demands
- Having several sites gives business continuity

#### DISADVANTAGES

- Lack of corporacy
- Creates cultural divide between non-emergency call takers and other staff
- Inequitable workload for 999 call takers
- Reduced flexibility to share call handling demand
- Unclear management responsibilities

## MODEL 3: DEVOLVED CONTACT CENTRES



<sup>1</sup>Only in place in some forces

<sup>2</sup>Deal with part of an attended incident (e.g. record crime and create crime report)

<sup>3</sup>Deal with non-attended incidents over the phone

<sup>4</sup>Officers attend the incident

Several sites, usually under BCU management, deliver a local call handling service. Both 999 and non-emergency calls are handled at a local level, with calls either being directed straight to each centre or routed there via a switchboard.

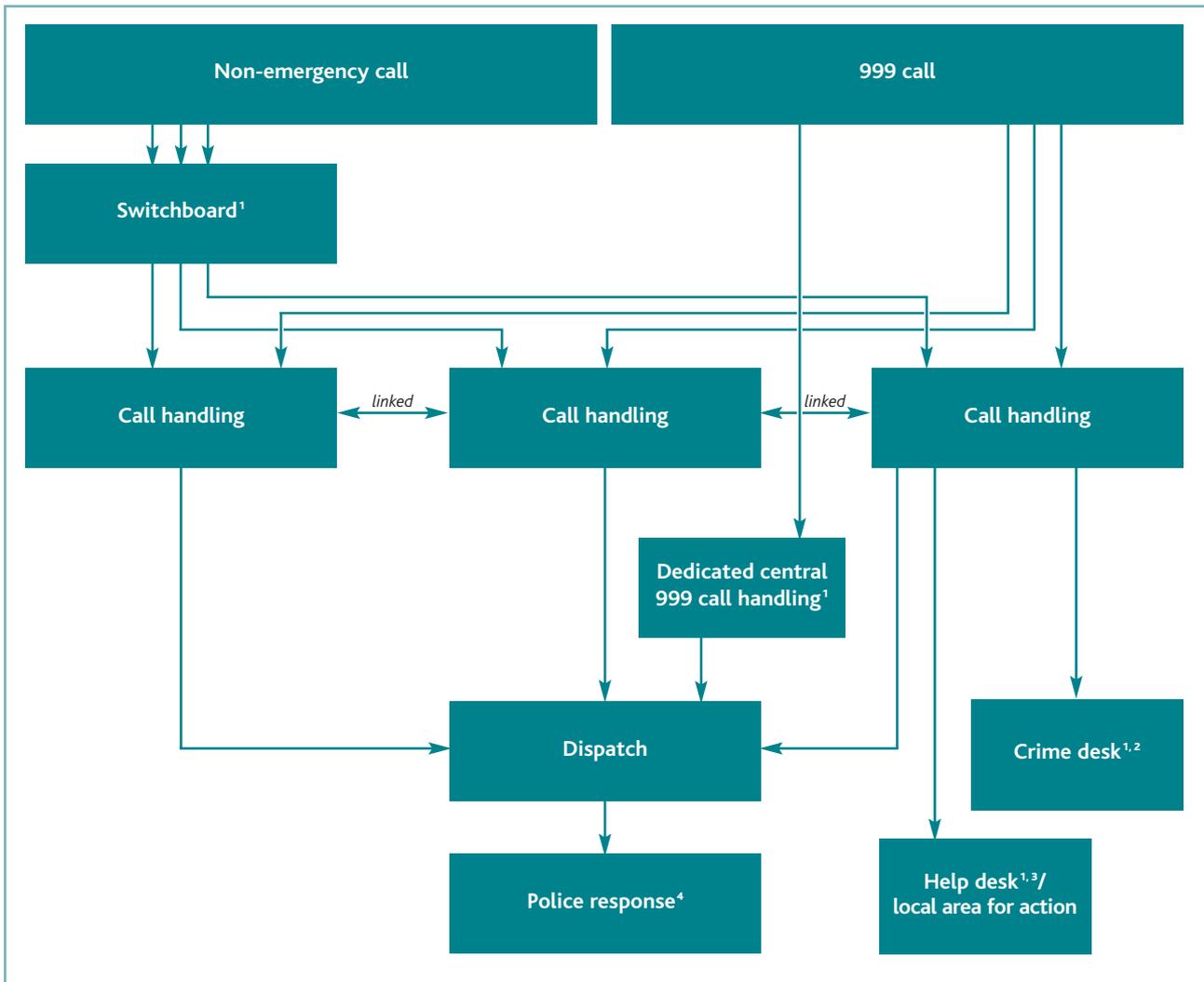
**ADVANTAGES**

- BCU ownership of the whole process
- Able to tailor service to meet local needs
- Public support for 'local' call handling and response
- Close relationships between call handlers, dispatchers and operational officers
- Having multiple sites provides business continuity

**DISADVANTAGES**

- Lack of corporacy
- Potential parochialism
- Inequitable workload between centres
- Does not support cross BCU border incidents
- Requires several AIRWAVE servers
- Lack of flexibility in staffing

MODEL 4: 'VIRTUAL' CONTACT CENTRE WITH MULTIPLE SITES



<sup>1</sup>Only in place in some forces

<sup>2</sup>Deal with part of an attended incident (e.g. record crime and create crime report)

<sup>3</sup>Deal with non-attended incidents over the phone

<sup>4</sup>Officers attend the incident

This is a variation of Model 1. A number of contact centres are linked electronically to enable both 999 and non-emergency calls from anywhere in the force area to be answered by a 'virtual' single site. In some forces, 999 call taking is co-located with a centralised dispatch function. Contact centres and the dispatch function are predominantly under the management of a centralised communications department.

**ADVANTAGES**

- Increased business continuity
- Sharing of demand between sites
- Flexible use of staff
- Single management structure

**DISADVANTAGES**

- Less corporacy than a single site
- Does not support joint agency working
- Increased overheads compared to single site
- Lack of supervision or increased costs to supervise multiple sites

## Appendix E

### Lancashire Directed Communication Model

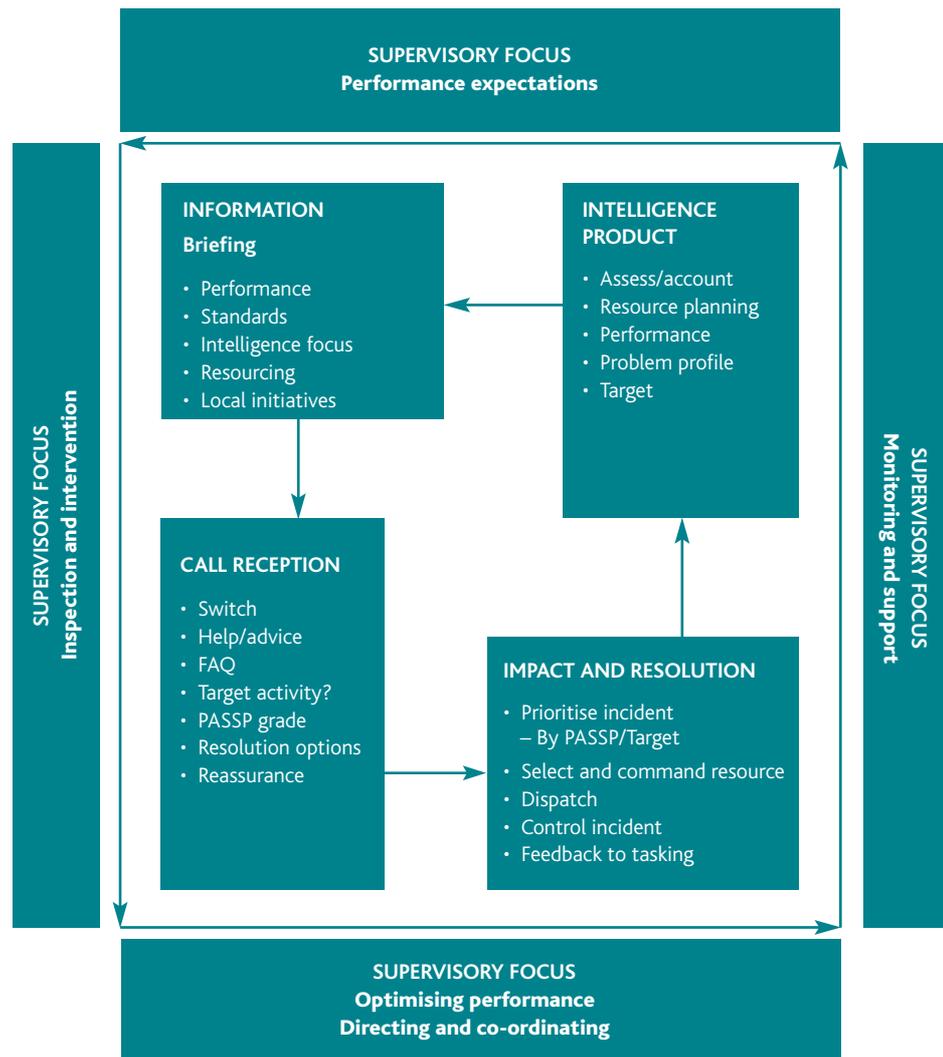
Lancashire Police have a well-developed call management strategy which directs the activities of its BCU-based communications centres. An integral component of this strategy is the Directed Communications Model, which seeks to use the National Intelligence Model (NIM) to drive performance. Managers in each division who are responsible for each of the Communication Centres have the following responsibilities:

- Use a deployment command model that incorporates the National Intelligence Model (NIM).
- Use this model to feed into established systems in order to target the types of incidents that are prioritised through the tasking process.
- Deliver appropriate structured briefings to control room operators.
- Balance the need for geographic policing with a command model that is able to use feedback mechanisms to highlight resource problems. For example, if officers are routinely required to move from one geographic area to another, highlight this at tactical meetings in order to promote further investigation.

The extract below is taken from the strategy:

**“By using this model each division can demonstrate that they have efficient and effective systems in place to manage their information exchange, and justify deployment decisions arising from this. The model has the capacity to dynamically assess incident reports against a known framework, so laying the basis for identifying opportunities and risks consistent with current intelligence and business objectives. The model has built-in feedback mechanisms so that developing issues of concern to the community, officers, supervisors and managers can be fed back and addressed as part of the tasking process. The supervisory focus exists to ensure that these results are delivered, whilst ensuring accountability for actions.”**

Lancashire Police Directed Communications Model



### EXPLANATION OF MODEL

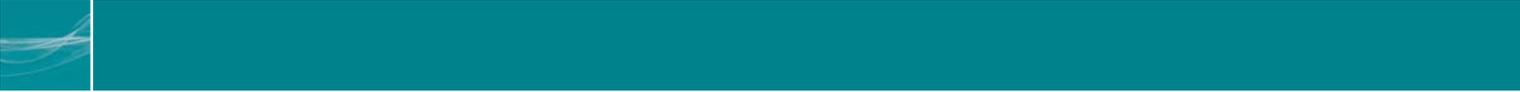
The Directed Communications Model is based on NIM processes.

- The '**Intelligence Product**' stage comprises the work and intelligence from previous weeks that will guide the activity of the Communication Centre and plan for how that work will be proactively carried out.
- The '**Information**' box is a summary of the activity required to prepare and deliver briefings to communication staff. The form and shape of the briefing will be decided locally and the briefing should be short and relevant. It should take into account the fact that communication operators represent many different geographic areas in their working day and require focused briefings and not information overload. Briefings should include a mixture of formal briefings and self-briefings.
- The '**Call Reception**' stage contains the options and tools available to call handlers.
- The '**Impact and Resolution**' stage contains the options and tools available to incident handlers and the feedback loop for all staff to report activity back into the processes that feed the 'intelligence product'.

## Appendix F

### Baseline Assessment grading 2004/05

HMIC Baseline Assessment 2005 CALL MANAGEMENT			
	2003/04 gradings	Revised October 2004	2004/05 gradings
Avon and Somerset	Good	Good	Fair
Bedfordshire	Good	Good	Good
Cambridgeshire	Fair	Fair	Fair
Cheshire	Good	Good	Fair
City of London	Fair	Fair	Fair
Cleveland	Poor	Poor	Fair
Cumbria	Good	Good	Fair
Derbyshire	Good	Good	Good
Devon and Cornwall	Fair	Fair	Fair
Dorset	Fair	Fair	Fair
Durham	Fair	Fair	Fair
Dyfed-Powys	Fair	Fair	Fair
Essex	Fair	Fair	Good
Gloucestershire	Good	Good	Good
Greater Manchester	Fair	Fair	Poor
Gwent	Fair	Fair	Fair
Hampshire	Good	Good	Excellent
Hertfordshire	Good	Good	Good
Humberside	Poor	Poor	Poor
Kent	Good	Good	Excellent
Lancashire	Good	Good	Good
Leicestershire	Good	Good	Good
Lincolnshire	Fair	Fair	Good
Merseyside	Fair	Fair	Fair
MPS	Fair	Fair	Good
Norfolk	Fair	Fair	Fair
North Wales	Fair	Fair	Fair
North Yorkshire	Fair	Fair	Good
Northamptonshire	Good	Good	Good
Northumbria	Fair	Fair	Good
Nottinghamshire	Fair	Good	Fair
South Wales	Fair	Fair	Fair
South Yorkshire	Poor	Poor	Fair
Staffordshire	Good	Good	Good
Suffolk	Poor	Poor	Fair
Surrey	Good	Good	Good
Sussex	Poor	Poor	Fair
Thames Valley	Fair	Fair	Good
Warwickshire	Fair	Fair	Fair
West Mercia	Good	Good	Good
West Midlands	Fair	Good	Excellent
West Yorkshire	Fair	Fair	Good
Wiltshire	Good	Good	Fair



## Appendix G

### Framework for good practice, assessment matrix and diagnostic performance measures

#### INTRODUCTION

This appendix sets out a framework for good practice and an assessment matrix. It also makes suggestions for using the set of diagnostic performance measures contained within the NCHS, which can be used by all forces to improve contact centre performance.

#### The framework for good practice

The framework for good practice and performance measures build upon the NCHS, published in April 2005 by ACPO. The scope of the framework has been extended to cover all of the key business drivers addressed in the inspection, namely:

- putting your customer first;
- getting the business culture right;
- developing effective strategy and organisational structure;
- investing in people development;
- ensuring continuing professional and skills development;
- making best use of management information.

The subjects of 'location and facilities' and 'technology' were not originally covered within the NCHS but were identified as additional drivers that are important to the overall performance of contact centres.

#### The assessment matrix

The assessment matrix has been added in its entirety as a result of the inspection. It takes each of the standards from the enlarged NCHS and sets out a range of descriptions that reflect degrees of performance against the standard. The descriptions are allocated scores (between two and eight points) to reflect the performance levels achieved. They are designed to allow a consistency of assessment, whether carried out internally (as a self-assessment) or externally.

The matrix has been designed with forces in mind, so that they can make a self-assessment of their progress against the NCHS, as well as representing a core tool within any focused or detailed inspection of their contact management facility or function. It is a recommendation in this report that ACPO, together with HMIC, further develop the standards and assessment framework and identify any relevant weightings of those standards or drivers that need to occur before grading forces' performance.

#### Diagnostic performance measures

This inspection has proposed an increase in the list of standards in the framework for good practice and this will require the development of a comprehensive set of diagnostic performance measures for use in measuring performance. An example of how forces can use a group of performance indicators to measure the success of implementing any element of the framework is suggested in this appendix.

It is expected that recommendations 17 and 20 of this report will provide the catalyst for the service to seize the opportunity to build on the good work, started in the NCHS, to establish clear and unequivocal standards and measures.

## THE FRAMEWORK OF GOOD PRACTICE

The contents of this framework comprise a list of statements that together set out the standards that should be expected of a high-performing police contact centre. The standards are listed under the eight business drivers accepted as key elements of good performance. However, they are presented as an amalgam of those areas that are measurable.

### 1. Putting the customer first by:

- 1.1 identifying, through consultation and analysis, the different customer groupings relevant to contact management;
- 1.2 ensuring a process is in place to regularly consult customers and using the results to improve services. Placing customer feedback at the centre of organisational thinking and planning;
- 1.3 monitoring complaints and positive feedback to resolve repeat problems and identify best practice;
- 1.4 keeping them informed with relevant and timely information in relation to reported incidents or enquiries;
- 1.5 providing customers with regular information on services provided and standards to better manage demand and customer expectations;
- 1.6 recognising the important part played by staff in determining the customer experience; and
- 1.7 ensuring timely and appropriate response to all forms of contact media so that no group or individual is unfairly disadvantaged in gaining access to the service.

### 2. Getting the business culture right by:

- 2.1 recognising contact management as a core element of operational service delivery that supports organisational objectives with proactive leadership and support at chief officer and departmental levels;
- 2.2 communicating organisational objectives and the contact centre strategy to all employees;
- 2.3 recognising and rewarding achievements and performance that support a high-quality service rather than simply creating a target-driven culture;
- 2.4 having a process to regularly consult, engage and survey employees using results to improve service delivery; and
- 2.5 putting a mechanism in place to foster and encourage corporacy and co-ordination between contact centre and other policing functions.

### 3. Developing effective strategy and organisational structure by:

- 3.1 developing a call handling strategy incorporating a demand management strategy to meet both business and customer needs;
- 3.2 having policies, procedures and a programme of action to deliver the strategy, together with an analysis and evaluation process to measure success, and a process in place to communicate the strategy to the force and external stakeholders;
- 3.3 empowering employees to participate in service delivery and decision-making processes;

- 3.4 putting in place business continuity and disaster recovery plans which will be regularly reviewed and tested; and
- 3.5 forecasting demand and business planning to inform budget setting.
- 4. Investing in 'people' development by:**
  - 4.1 creating a human resource strategy which recognises the needs of contact centre operations;
  - 4.2 having an effective and legally compliant recruitment policy;
  - 4.3 ensuring that the right number of skilled staff and supervisors are working at the right time;
  - 4.4 forecasting employees' career progression and developmental needs;
  - 4.5 putting in place personal performance development plans for all staff; and
  - 4.6 carrying out exit interviews to understand why staff leave and to use the information to improve conditions.
- 5. Ensuring continuing professional and skills development by:**
  - 5.1 having in place a training strategy that is linked to a costed HR strategy and planned training designed around training needs to deliver cost-effective training;
  - 5.2 providing staff at all levels with relevant and specific training to meet individual personal development and organisational goals;
  - 5.3 ensuring that mentoring and tutoring support exists for new and existing staff; and
  - 5.4 supporting employees at all levels in achieving industry standard qualifications.
- 6. Investing in good location and facilities by:**
  - 6.1 ensuring that workplaces are well designed, provide areas for refreshments, meetings etc and meet health and safety requirements for all equipment, including furniture.
- 7. Making the most of contact centre technology by:**
  - 7.1 having appropriate technology matched to, and driven by, strategic and business requirements, integrated into current systems to assist in reducing delays and duplications, making it user-friendly for staff and customers, and adding value to the customer experience;
  - 7.2 having a range of communication channels available to those seeking to contact the force tailored to meet both customer and organisational needs;
  - 7.3 ensuring timely, accurate and relevant information and intelligence is available to call handlers at the point of interaction with the caller to aid decision-making, grading and call resolution; and
  - 7.4 having management and performance information to assist in supervision, assessment and improvement of services.
- 8. Making best use of management information by:**
  - 8.1 having a performance management framework that uses timely and accurate quantitative and quality assurance information to inform management in the decision-making process and deliver continuous improvement; and
  - 8.2 regularly reviewing contact centre services and processes.



## ASSESSMENT MATRIX

### 1. PUTTING THE CUSTOMER FIRST

#### 1.1 IDENTIFYING, THROUGH CONSULTATION AND ANALYSIS, DIFFERENT CUSTOMER GROUPINGS RELEVANT TO CONTACT MANAGEMENT

2	4	6	8
Ad-hoc processes are in place to collect customer information, with no clear plan in place to use this to improve performance.	A structured process is in place to collect customer information, and an analysis of information carried out.	A structured process is in place to collect customer information, and an analysis is carried out. The information is used to target the needs of different customer groups to improve performance.	Service delivery and future business process and planning is designed around analysis of customer feedback to achieve excellence.

#### 1.2 PLACING CUSTOMER FEEDBACK AND SATISFACTION AT THE CENTRE OF ORGANISATIONAL THINKING

2	4	6	8
Limited customer satisfaction information is available.	Regular surveys are used to understand customer satisfaction. A structured process of gathering data on customer satisfaction is in place and there is strong evidence of action based on findings.	Satisfaction measures are an embedded part of individual and organisational measures and improvement plans.	Customer feedback is at the centre of organisational thinking and recognition mechanisms.

#### 1.3 MONITORING COMPLAINTS AND POSITIVE FEEDBACK, TO RESOLVE REPEAT PROBLEMS AND IDENTIFY GOOD PRACTICE

2	4	6	8
There is ad-hoc management and tracking of complaints.	A documented process is in place to track complaints and ensure that they are resolved. It also addresses root causes of problems to restore customer satisfaction.	Appropriate levels of staff empowerment to deal with complaints and escalation processes are in place and supported at frontline level.	Customer complaints and letters of thanks are used to develop the service. Customer feedback is at the centre of organisational thinking.

#### 1.4 PROVIDING METHODS FOR KEEPING CUSTOMERS INFORMED ON PROGRESS OF PARTICULAR INCIDENTS OR ENQUIRIES

2	4	6	8
Ad-hoc contact is made to update the customer in relation to the incident.	A structured process for contacting customers is in place to keep them informed.	Customer contact systems are in place with satisfaction measures including follow-up contact. Customer feedback is used to develop the service and tailor it to individual customer needs.	Keeping the customer informed with relevant and timely information in relation to incidents or enquiries is at the centre of organisational thinking.

**1.5 PROVIDING CUSTOMERS WITH REGULAR INFORMATION ON SERVICES PROVIDED**

2	4	6	8
Ad-hoc customer information is available with no clear plan.	A plan is in place to inform customers of services provided.	A documented process is in place which ensures that customers receive timely relevant information regarding customer access and services.	Providing customers with regular information on services provided and accessibility is part of force plans and objectives.

**1.6 RECOGNISING THE IMPORTANT PART PLAYED BY STAFF IN DETERMINING THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE**

2	4	6	8
Ad-hoc meetings are held with limited involvement for frontline staff in contributing to decision making.	A process is in place to include staff in the decision-making process.	A range of processes are in place to include staff in decision making to ensure their views are valued and they are involved in delivering continuous improvement.	All staff are involved (from frontline to executive) in delivering continuous improvement. Actions are planned and benefits to the organisation are measured.

**1.7 ENSURING TIMELY AND APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO ALL FORMS OF CONTACT MEDIA SO THAT NO GROUP OR INDIVIDUAL IS UNFAIRLY DISADVANTAGED IN GAINING ACCESS TO THE SERVICE**

2	4	6	8
The NCHS service level target only exists on telephone response times.	Ad-hoc measures are in place for multi-media access.	Clear service levels are in place to respond to requests via all media (for example telephone, email and SMS).	Clear service levels are in place to respond to requests (for example via telephone contact, email and SMS). Performance information is used to monitor and improve service delivery.



## 2. GETTING THE BUSINESS CULTURE RIGHT

### 2.1 RECOGNISING CONTACT MANAGEMENT AS A CORE ELEMENT OF OPERATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY THAT SUPPORTS ORGANISATIONAL OBJECTIVES WITH PROACTIVE LEADERSHIP AND SUPPORT AT CHIEF OFFICER AND DEPARTMENT LEVEL

2	4	6	8
Contact management does not appear on agendas and is not prioritised as a business area.	Contact management only appears on operational and departmental agendas and appears on executive agendas on a ad-hoc basis.	Contact management appears on the organisation agenda at executive level. It is prioritised at operational and departmental level.	Contact management is regarded as a fundamental part of service delivery. It appears on the organisation agenda at executive level. Clear leadership and support is given by chief officers and is given priority as a business area.

### 2.2 COMMUNICATING ORGANISATIONAL OBJECTIVES AND THE CONTACT CENTRE STRATEGY TO ALL EMPLOYEES

2	4	6	8
There is ad-hoc communication based on events or issues.	A regular and effective formal communication structure is in place that encompasses a number of different media channels to communicate organisational objectives to staff.	A regular and effective formal communication structure is in place and its effectiveness is demonstrated by an increase in performance.	Communicating organisational objectives is a key driver of performance. There are high levels of visibility and commitment to the organisation.

### 2.3 RECOGNISING AND REWARDING ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE THAT SUPPORT A QUALITY SERVICE RATHER THAN SIMPLY CREATING A TARGET-DRIVEN CULTURE

2	4	6	8
No process or ad-hoc reward or recognition scheme is in place.	A reward and recognition scheme is in place but is not linked to quality performance. There is no clear evaluation of its success.	A reward and recognition scheme that is designed around effective performance is evaluated and measured against contact centre service delivery.	A structured scheme is in place that recognises and rewards staff for quality performance and is not target-driven.

### 2.4 HAVING PROCESSES IN PLACE TO REGULARLY CONSULT, ENGAGE AND SURVEY EMPLOYEES

2	4	6	8
Ad-hoc staff satisfaction surveys are carried out with no meaningful results produced to be useful at contact centre level.	A regular documented process is in place to survey employees and ensure employees' feedback is collected at contact centre level.	Employees' views are surveyed and the feedback received is action-planned and used to develop and improve service delivery.	Staff feedback received is action-planned and used to develop and improve service delivery. Staff satisfaction and high customer satisfaction are at the centre of organisational thinking.

### 2.5 HAVING MECHANISMS IN PLACE TO FOSTER AND ENCOURAGE CORPORACY AND CO-ORDINATION BETWEEN CONTACT CENTRE AND OTHER POLICING FUNCTIONS

2	4	6	8
The contact centre is stand-alone with limited interaction across the organisation.	Individual networks and relationships are used to resolve cross-departmental business issues.	Proactive processes are in place, which ensure all cross-departmental business issues are identified and resolved.	The contact centre is fully integrated into force business and interaction with other functions is co-ordinated and positively supports corporacy.

### 3. DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE STRATEGY AND ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

#### 3.1 DEVELOPING A CONTACT MANAGEMENT STRATEGY, INCORPORATING A DEMAND MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

2	4	6	8
No contact centre strategy is documented.	A contact centre strategy is in place and includes managing demand.	A contact centre strategy is in place and reflects the force and national strategies currently in place. Demand management is a core element and targets resources to meet strategic priorities.	The contact centre strategy is fully implemented, and includes demand management. It is communicated to staff and stakeholders. Staff are fully aware of their individual contribution to delivering force objectives.

#### 3.2 HAVING POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND A PROGRAMME OF ACTION IN PLACE TO DELIVER THE STRATEGY, AND A COMMUNICATION PROCESS IN PLACE TO COMMUNICATE THE STRATEGY TO THE FORCE AND EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

2	4	6	8
Minimum policies are in place to deliver the strategy with no clear programme of action or evaluation process.	Policies and procedures are in place with no clear programme to deliver the strategy and with limited communication.	Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place with a clear delivery programme. Communication internally and externally is developing but not fully implemented.	An evaluation process is in place and is used to measure how the strategy affects performance. Using a range of methods, the strategy is clearly communicated to force and external stakeholders.

#### 3.3 EMPOWERING EMPLOYEES TO PARTICIPATE IN SERVICE DELIVERY AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

2	4	6	8
There are few or no opportunities to participate in service delivery and the decision-making process.	Some processes are in place to encourage or allow staff participation and involvement.	A range of co-ordinated approaches are used to include staff in decision-making; feedback is used to improve service delivery.	Appropriately trained and equipped staff are empowered to participate in the decision-making process and two-way communication takes place at every level.

#### 3.4 PUTTING IN PLACE BUSINESS CONTINUITY AND DISASTER RECOVERY PLANS WHICH ARE REGULARLY REVIEWED AND TESTED

2	4	6	8
Contingency/disaster recovery has not been thought through or only one element is in place.	Key areas have been identified for recovery and both plans are in place but there is no structure for review or testing.	Both plans are in place to cover all scenarios, service and cost are balanced, and there is some evidence of review and testing.	Robust plans are in place, which are regularly tested and reviewed to cope with expected scenarios and maintain service delivery.

#### 3.5 FORECASTING DEMAND AND BUSINESS PLANNING TO INFORM BUDGET SETTING

2	4	6	8
Limited forecasting and resource planning is in place.	Call forecasting and planning is an important part of operations. Rotas achieve appropriate balance for individuals and the organisation.	A range of methods is used to manage capacity and demand, with flexible approaches to resourcing.	Call forecasting and planning are linked to the long-term strategy and used to set a realistic budget.



## 4. INVESTING IN 'PEOPLE' DEVELOPMENT

### 4.1 CREATING A HUMAN RESOURCE STRATEGY WHICH RECOGNISES THE NEEDS OF CONTACT CENTRE OPERATIONS

2	4	6	8
Force human resource strategy incorporates contact centre needs. Low-level human resource involvement is in place.	The contact centre has a human resource strategy linked to force strategy.	The contact centre has a human resource strategy linked to force strategy. HR specialists have a high involvement with the contact centre.	The contact centre has a costed human resource strategy linked to force strategy. The strategy has a positive impact on performance. Dedicated HR experience has a high involvement with the contact centre.

### 4.2 HAVING AN EFFECTIVE AND LEGALLY COMPLIANT RECRUITMENT POLICY IN PLACE

2	4	6	8
Recruitment and induction is dealt with on an ad-hoc and unstructured basis.	Requirements are linked to a resource plan. Assessment covers a balance of relevant competency areas and tests. There is an integrated induction and training programme.	Integrated recruitment, induction and ongoing training programmes are in place, and development begins at recruitment.	Long-term initiatives ensure appropriately skilled resources are available. There is a focus on holistic employment approaches and long-term gains.

### 4.3 ENSURING THAT THE RIGHT NUMBER OF SKILLED STAFF AND SUPERVISORS ARE WORKING AT THE RIGHT TIME

2	4	6	8
Limited forecasting and resource planning is in place.	Call forecasting and planning is an important part of operations. Rotas achieve appropriate balance for individuals and the organisation.	A range of methods is used to manage capacity and demand, and there are flexible approaches to resourcing.	Call forecasting and planning are linked to the long-term strategy and used to ensure that the right number of staff and supervisors are on duty to meet demands.

### 4.4 FORECASTING EMPLOYEES' CAREER PROGRESSION AND DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS

2	4	6	8
There is limited demonstration of career progression.	A career progression scheme is available but is not measured against overall performance.	Career progression and developmental needs are mapped against organisational and employee needs.	Career progression and developmental needs are mapped against organisational and employee needs, and are measured against overall unit performance.

**4.5 HAVING PERSONAL PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENT PLANS IN PLACE**

<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>
Individual performance measurement is based on a limited number of statistical measures.	Performance measures are in place balanced between quantity and quality. There is limited use of these when setting individual targets.	A balanced set of measures linked to recognition and development are used to set and to agree individual targets linked to recognition and improvements.	There is an overriding feeling of honesty in performance feedback to staff. Individual empowerment and performance are an integral part of the culture and organisation.

**4.6 CARRYING OUT EXIT INTERVIEWS TO UNDERSTAND WHY STAFF LEAVE AND USING THE INFORMATION TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS**

<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>
There is no process in place to carry out exit interviews or to collate results.	An ad-hoc process is in place to collect and collate exit interview results.	A documented process is in place to collect and collate timely exit interview results. The information is used to address issues.	A robust process is in place to collect and collate timely exit interview results. Analysis is carried out and the information used to improve performance and ensure the recruitment process is evaluated and developed accordingly.



## 5. ENSURING CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

### 5.1 HAVING A TRAINING STRATEGY THAT IS LINKED TO A COSTED HR STRATEGY AND PLANNED TRAINING DESIGNED AROUND TRAINING NEEDS TO DELIVER COST-EFFECTIVE TRAINING

2	4	6	8
Ad-hoc training is delivered with little or no evaluation against organisational performance.	A training strategy is in place. There is a training plan in place, but it is not costed or designed around a training need analysis.	A cost-effective training plan has been designed around training need analysis and is evaluated against performance.	A cost-effective training plan linked to a costed HR strategy exploits the use of technology and has been designed around customer needs and expectations. It is evaluated against its effectiveness and organisational performance.

### 5.2 PROVIDING STAFF AT ALL LEVELS WITH RELEVANT AND SPECIFIC TRAINING TO MEET INDIVIDUAL PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND ORGANISATIONAL NEEDS

2	4	6	8
There is limited evidence of ongoing training or development planning.	Personal development planning is in place. There is evidence of progression based on this process.	Training is designed around organisational and individual needs. Development planning is used as part of broader succession planning.	Training and development is central to the employment contract. It is individually tailored and designed around organisational and individual needs.

### 5.3 ENSURING THAT MENTORING AND TUTORING SUPPORT EXISTS FOR NEW AND EXISTING STAFF

2	4	6	8
No mentoring or tutoring role exists in the contact centre.	Ad-hoc mentoring and tutoring exists. No formal structured process is in place.	Trained mentors and tutors are in place and are recruited using a formal structured process.	Mentors and tutors are in place and their effectiveness is formally measured and evaluated.

### 5.4 SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES AT ALL LEVELS IN ACHIEVING INDUSTRY STANDARD QUALIFICATIONS

2	4	6	8
No standard qualifications are available to employees.	Employees are able to achieve a limited qualification.	Industry standard qualifications, which meet individual and organisational needs, are available to all employees.	Bespoke industry standard qualifications are supported by the organisation and are widely available to staff.

6. INVESTING IN GOOD LOCATION AND FACILITIES

6.1 ENSURING THAT WORKPLACES ARE WELL DESIGNED, PROVIDING AREAS FOR REFRESHMENTS, MEETINGS ETC

2	4	6	8
There is minimal investment in the working environment.	The contact centre environment supports safe and effective working.	The contact centre environment is designed with staff input to support wellbeing.	There is a high standard of ergonomically designed features to meet health and safety requirements to deliver continuous improvement in performance.



## 7. MAKING THE MOST OF CONTACT CENTRE TECHNOLOGY

### 7.1 HAVING APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY MATCHED TO, AND DRIVEN BY, STRATEGIC AND BUSINESS REQUIREMENTS, AND INTEGRATED INTO CURRENT SYSTEMS

2	4	6	8
Lack of systems integration produces delays and duplication.	Some integration is evident, but technology still relies on staff support or 'work-arounds' to achieve effectiveness.	Systems are well integrated and user-friendly. Delays and duplication of effort are minimised.	Systems are fully integrated and user-friendly, resulting in high levels of staff satisfaction, and reduced delays and duplication. They have been designed around customer need.

### 7.2 HAVING A RANGE OF COMMUNICATION CHANNELS AVAILABLE TO THOSE SEEKING TO CONTACT THE FORCE, TAILORED TO MEET BOTH CUSTOMER AND ORGANISATIONAL NEEDS

2	4	6	8
Telephone contact is the only option available.	Some use of multi-media provides accessibility beyond just telephone. Options reflect available finance rather than business needs or projections.	Multi-media channels are available, enabling a wider access to the organisation. Options provided reflect a documented business plan.	Multi-media channels have been designed with business growth and customer needs in mind. They have improved accessibility and customer satisfaction.

### 7.3 PROVIDING TIMELY, ACCURATE AND RELEVANT INFORMATION TO CALL HANDLERS AT THE POINT OF INTERACTION WITH THE CALLER TO AID DECISION MAKING, GRADING AND CALL RESOLUTION

2	4	6	8
Systems do not supply integrated timely information to call handlers.	Limited information is available at the point of caller interaction.	The caller's details and relevant information from corporate systems are available at the point of interaction.	Systems have been designed to deliver a wide range of timely information at the point of interaction and assist in the call grading and decision-making process.

### 7.4 USING MANAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE INFORMATION TO ASSIST IN SUPERVISORS' ASSESSMENT AND IMPROVEMENT OF SERVICES

2	4	6	8
Limited management information is available.	Management and performance information is available but is not comprehensive and/or requires additional effort to interpret before informing decisions.	A range of relevant management information is available and is routinely used by managers to inform decisions and deployment.	Relevant management and performance information is available in real time, historically and predictively. It is relevant and directly supports decisions and service improvement.

## 8. MAKING BEST USE OF MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

### 8.1 HAVING AN EMBEDDED PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK IN PLACE THAT USES TIMELY AND ACCURATE QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DATA TO INFORM MANAGEMENT IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

2	4	6	8
A limited set of measures are in place. They are focused on statistical management information.	A broad range of statistical performance measures are in place.	A balanced range of measures, at contact centre and individual level, are used to make decisions by managers and reflect contact centre performance and quality.	Groups of measures are used which clearly focus on individual and contact centre performance. Individual measures focus on effectiveness. Performance information is at the centre of the decision-making process.

### 8.2 HAVING REGULAR REVIEWS OF CONTACT CENTRE SERVICES AND PROCESSES

2	4	6	8
Few or no reviews take place within the contact centre.	Ad-hoc reviews of service delivery are conducted on how the contact centre delivers its service.	A regular and effective review process is in place. The results of the reviews are measured against contact centre performance.	A robust review process is clearly documented. Benefits are realised, and results drive continuous organisational performance.

## DIAGNOSTIC PERFORMANCE MEASURES

### Introduction

Chief Constables' Council endorsed the full NCHS, and chief constables have resolved to achieve the standards and measures in all forces by April 2006.

The NCHS proposed a number of suggested performance measures that forces can use to measure their service delivery. It did not extend to correlating the standards and the performance measures. However, in Chapter 9 of this inspection report it is recommended that a national forum should agree a suite of measures to be used nationally. The full range of measures can be found in the NCHS document (available at [www.policereform.co.uk](http://www.policereform.co.uk)).

The suggested use of the performance indicators and assessment framework entails the grouping of indicators together to measure elements of the good practice framework.

For example:

#### GOOD PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

3.3 Empowering employees to participate in service delivery and decision-making processes.

#### NCHS PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Staff perception/satisfaction levels %.  
Sickness rates.  
Turnover rates.  
Customer satisfaction levels %.

Some measures will be unique to a force and its strategy. Definitions are required around the performance indicators and terminology contained in the NCHS good practice framework. In order to progress it is recommended in Chapter 10 of this inspection report that ACPO, together with HMIC, further develop standards, an assessment matrix and diagnostic performance measures identifying any relevant weightings of those standards or drivers that need to occur before grading forces' performance.

## Appendix H

### Glossary of terms, commonly used phrases and abbreviations

TERM	DEFINITION
Abandoned calls	Calls which arrive at the automatic call distributor but terminate before an agent has answered.
Automatic call distributor or automatic call distribution (ACD)	Technology which facilitates the handling of large call volumes by controlling the order in which calls are offered to agents, routing calls to particular agent groups and providing a wide range of statistical information used in managing a call centre. Either hardware- or software-based, the ACD offers sophisticated options for call handling within a centre.
ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers.
ACPOS	Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland).
AIRWAVE	Digital trunked radio system.
APA	Association of Police Authorities.
Attrition	The loss of staff from a centre, usually described as a percentage of total staff.
Auto attendant/ Interactive voice response (IVR)	Software which will automatically interact with a caller either through a keypad (auto attendant) or voice recognition (IVR). This will provide information or direct calls, as appropriate.
Available	Logged into the ACD and waiting for an inbound call. Also called idle or ready.
Average speed of answer (ASA)	The average length of time a caller waits to be connected to an agent – the total delay divided by total number of calls.
BCS	British Crime Survey.
BCU	Basic Command Unit – typically a geographic policing area.
Benchmarking	The process of measuring products, services and practices against the market, competitors or those companies recognised as industry leaders.
Blocked call	A call that cannot be connected immediately because no line is available at the time the call arrives or the ACD is programmed to stop calls from entering the queue when the queue exceeds a defined size.
BT	British Telecom.
Business continuity	A methodology to create a plan for how an organisation will resume partially or completely interrupted critical functions within a predetermined time after a disaster or disruption.

TERM	DEFINITION
BVR	Best Value review.
Call/contact centre	A central point for receipt of calls for service. The term 'contact centre' is gradually replacing the term 'call centre' because it more accurately describes the activities now taking place. In addition to telephony, contact centres provide customer access through email and increasingly through webchat.
Call or contact centre manager	Person with overall operational responsibility for the management of the call or contact centre.
Call handler	A person working within the call handling environment who answers calls, determines the call circumstances, decides the call responses and initiates or implements the call responses.
Call handling	The operational activity of answering calls, investigating calls, deciding call responses and implementing or initiating call responses.
Call handling demand	The number and profile of calls presented to the call handling environment.
Call handling/communications environment	The space provided by a force to accommodate its call handlers including all ergonomic factors from the immediate surrounding of a call handler at a workstation to the general surroundings of the call handling operation.
Call response	The response that the call handler implements or initiates, which is usually one or a combination of the following: connect caller; advise caller; refer caller; transfer caller; send report; or arrange for assignment.
Call screening	A process for directing calls via an auto attendant or IVR system.
Call type	An assessment of the call circumstances against a set of predefined type codes.
Call line identification (CLI)	The identification of the inbound caller in a call or contact centre from their telephone number. Potentially, this enables customer details to be retrieved from the customer database and displayed on the agent's screen (screen-popping). It is also called calling line identification, automatic number identification and calling party number.
Computer-based training (CBT)	A process by which, through interaction between a user and a computer, training is delivered at the user's pace. Access is through a specific program or can be web-based.
Computer telephony integration (CTI)	The software, hardware and programming that automatically links voice with the data stored in the computer providing sophisticated customer management possibilities. CTI will usually allow calls and accompanying information to be passed between workstations for referral.

TERM	DEFINITION
Connect caller	A call response by which a telephone caller is put through to a destination extension and the call handler does not wait with the caller for the destination extension to be answered. (Although technically possible, commercial and contractual issues with BT and Cable & Wireless may prevent connection of calls on 999 lines.)
Customer relationship management (CRM)	A system designed to support the collection and analysis of customer-relevant information and make it available to relevant people (e.g. call-takers) to enable them to provide a service tailored to the customer's needs.
Database	Any collection of information, but generally one which can be segmented and searched automatically.
Direct dial inward (DDI)	The option to dial directly into an organisation and reach a specific extension without going through a switchboard.
Disaster recovery	The process of restoring an operation after an interruption of service, including equipment repair and/or replacement, file recovery and/or restoration, and resumption of service to users.
Dispatcher	A person working within the dispatching environment who assigns operational units to incidents and supports the activities of operational units whether at incidents or not.
E-business	All business that is conducted over or from the internet, digital television or email.
E-learning	Learning together through the internet etc without necessarily physically being together.
E-policing	E-business specifically related to the police service.
Enhanced information service for emergency calls (EISEC)	A system which allows the population of a call handler's screen with the name and address of the subscriber making a 999 call.
Erlang	A formula developed to determine call traffic management, including scheduling of agents, call forecasting and service level achievement. There are several versions of the formula, each with a slightly different purpose.
Extranet	Internet-like system where, in addition to staff, access is extended to specific users outside the organisation.
Fall-back	A business continuity mechanism that enables continuation of service delivery after a failure of the service or a component or group of components of that service.
First point of contact	The first place the caller is answered, typically either a switchboard, an automated response or, in the case of a 'one stop shop', a call handler.
Full-time equivalent (FTE)	The number of agents employed or required expressed in terms of total staff hours required divided by the number of hours a full-time agent would normally work.

TERM	DEFINITION
Help desk	A dedicated function intended to resolve non-attendance calls or deal with protracted enquiries. This can either be part of the contact centre or BCU-based.
HMIC	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary.
ICCS	Integrated Communications Control System (radio and line communications).
Intranet	A network that uses the internet but is contained within a controlled environment, for example, internal organisational information that can only be viewed by employees.
Interactive voice response (IVR)/ auto attendant	Software which will automatically interact with a caller either through a keypad or using voice recognition software. This will provide information or direct calls as appropriate.
Interactive web response (IWR)	A system that enables customers to transact business over the internet, interacting with the organisation's databases, then transfer to an agent in the contact centre to continue the transaction over the phone or via webchat.
Key performance indicators (KPI)	Those areas identified by organisations as being critical to their successful performance.
Management information services (MIS)	ACD reports providing data on staff and staff groups, inbound and outbound calls, and exchange lines.
Monitoring	The process of listening to agents' telephone calls for the purpose of maintaining quality.
Multi-media	Combining multiple forms of media such as voice, web, email and text in the communication of information.
National Call Handling Standards (NCHS)	The standards by which management, standard business continuity, support, supervision and operational activity within the call handling environments of all police forces will be assessed on a national basis.
NSIR	National Standard of Incident Reporting.
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification.
Offshoring	The process whereby calls are outsourced (see below) to a contact centre in a different country.
Outsourcing	A service in which an external call centre is employed to provide services under contract.
PITO	Police Information Technology Organisation.
Performance development review (PDR)	The process of reviewing an individual's qualitative and quantitative performance, setting objectives and measuring achievements.
Primary call handling	All calls which are received or handled by the main contact management function.

TERM	DEFINITION
Queue time	The number of seconds a call waits in queue before handling.
Queuing	Calls being held when no agents are free.
Ring time	The length of time between dialling and the call being answered.
Screen-popping	Integration between the computer and the telephone (CTI) which enables the system to attempt identification of each call and, if information exists, to automatically present this to the call-taker.
Secondary call handling	All calls to the force which are either transferred from or dealt with outside of the main contact centre function. This includes direct dial extensions and extensions in other departments or BCUs.
Service level	The percentage of calls you expect to handle in a specific number of seconds.
Service level agreement (SLA)	Performance objectives reached by consensus between the user and the provider of a service. A service level agreement specifies a variety of performance standards that may or may not include 'service level'.
Skills-based routing	A process where calls are identified and then routed through to the most appropriate member of staff.
SMS	Short message service. Also known as text messaging. Written messages sent from or received by mobile phones.
STORM	System for Tasking and Operational Resource Management – a command-and-control application.
Switch	The telephone exchange and/or ACD.
Talk time	The time in seconds an agent is talking, from answering a call to the caller hanging up.
Virtual call centre	A contact management structure consisting of several sites which are linked electronically to enable calls to be routed to any centre, thus allowing them to act as a single site for call handling and reporting purposes.
Voicemail	An electronic telephone message storage system, often with wide-ranging functionality.
Voice processing	A generic term for a variety of applications such as IVR, voicemail and auto attendants.
Voice recognition	The capability of a voice processing system to recognise and decipher spoken words and phrases.
Voice over IP (VoIP)	A convergence of voice and data networks.
Workforce management software	Software systems that forecast call load, calculate staff requirements, organise schedules and track real-time performance of individuals and groups.
Wrap up	The time spent completing work associated with a call after the caller has hung up. Also commonly referred to as after-call work.



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