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Thames Valley Police

Contact Management Strategy

THAMES VALLEY POLICE CONTACT MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

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1. This strategy has been developed taking account of the following key elements:
 - 1.1. **The National Call Handling Standards**
(April 2005)
 - 1.2. **Improving Call Handling & Demand Management**
(April 2005 Home Office Police Standards Unit and Crime Directorate)¹
 - 1.3. **Hate Crime: Delivering a Quality Service**
(April 2005 Home Office Police Standards Unit)²
 - 1.4. **HMIC Baseline Assessment of Thames Valley Police**
(October 2005 HMIC)³
 - 1.5. **'First Contact' A Thematic Inspection of Police Contact Management**
(November 2005 HMIC)⁴
 - 1.6. **Quality of Service Standards** (Home Office)⁵
 - 1.7. **Thames Valley Police 3 year Strategy 2005-2008**⁶
2. The term 'Contact centres' is used in recognition of the fact that initial contact to the Police that predominantly is by telephone is also moving into other electronic forms of communication, such as e-mail and SMS Text messaging. 'Contact Management' is the management of this initial contact with the public from the initial receipt of the contact through to resolution of the immediate nature of the contact. This may be the provision of information, securing the attendance of a Police Officer, the recording of a complaint of crime or any other method of achieving a resolution to the request for service. The scope of this strategy does not include direct contact at police station front counters, or the subsequent investigation of crimes or incidents and prosecution of offenders. It is confined to the scope of the key elements of contact management as identified within the Home Office and HMIC publications listed above.
3. To achieve the aims of Thames Valley Police (TVP) we provide a high quality of service in contact management for the public, delivering accurate and timely information for action by Basic Command Units, Local Police

¹ <http://police.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-and-publications/publication/community-policing/ImpCallHandling.pdf?view=Binary>

² <http://www.acpo.police.uk/asp/policies/Data/Hate%20Crime.pdf>

³ http://www.inspectorates.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmic/inspect_reports/1/baseline-assessments-ho-0506/thamesvalley-baseline05.pdf?view=Binary

⁴ http://inspectorates.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmic/inspect_reports/1/thematic-inspections/First_Contact.pdf?view=Binary

⁵ <http://police.homeoffice.gov.uk/police-reform/reform-programme/citizen-focus/customer-service-standards>

⁶ http://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/news_info/planning/planning.htm

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Areas, Neighbourhood teams and Operational Command Units within the Force area.

4. This will be achieved by ensuring the following elements are present to deliver an excellent level of performance
 - A virtual contact centre to receive and respond to calls for service from the public
 - An ethos of attempting to resolve the issue at the first point of contact
 - Appropriate and timely advice
 - The use of in-queue messaging to provide callers with advice appropriate to the circumstances
 - Information via appropriate IT systems in accordance with Force Policies and Standard Operating Procedures for action by others, including the deployment of police resources in accordance with the Incident Attendance Policy
 - The use of up to date IT systems to manage demand, the handling of information and deployment of resources
 - Obtaining feedback from customers and ensuring an active response
 - High performance in quantitative and qualitative performance indicators
 - A high level of training for staff
 - Effectively manage demand through matching staffing levels with forecast demand
 - Comprehensive Business Continuity plans regularly exercised

5. Virtual Contact Centre

- 5.1. TVP provides a virtual contact centre called the Police Enquiry Centre (PEC) with two geographical locations at Windsor and Kidlington utilising network telephony and call distribution software. The contact centre provides a service to the public and to Police employees, utilising different call queues and skills based routing. These are:

5.1.1. 999 Police Emergency (and 112)

5.1.2. Premium rate Alarm calls

5.1.3. Emergency Service calls from Fire and Ambulance

5.1.4. Public switchboard function where a named person or department is known

5.1.5. Public General Enquiries

5.1.6. Public reports of crime

5.1.7. Social Services Referrals

5.1.8. Police only Officer Reported Crime

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- 5.1.9.** Police only Missing Person updates
- 5.1.10.** E-mail, SMS Text and Facsimile messages (when available)
- 5.2.** A priority is allocated to the call distribution software between the different contact types with 999 calls (5.1.1) receiving highest priority, other emergency calls (5.1.2 and 5.1.3) receiving next highest priority and all other telephone calls receiving the third level of priority. E-mail, SMS Text and Facsimile messages (5.1.10) will receive the fourth level of priority.
- 5.3.** The National Call Handling Standards set minimum service levels for telephone call answering for specified types of call. These are:
 - 5.3.1.** 999 calls (5.1.1) – 90% answered within 10 seconds
 - 5.3.2.** Switchboard calls (5.1.4) – 90% answered within 30 seconds
 - 5.3.3.** Secondary handling of a switchboard call – 90% answered within 30 seconds
 - 5.3.4.** Other Public calls (5.1.5 – 5.1.7) – 90% answered within 40 seconds
- 5.4.** Non-telephone contact will be assessed within four hours of receipt, with an acknowledgement of receipt being provided to the person making the contact, and resolution 90% within 24 hours.
- 5.5** Public access to TVP for non-emergency telephone calls is via the single non-emergency number of 0845 8 505 505. Calls are charged in line with the tariff specified by the caller's service provider. TVP does not receive any profits from the use of the 0845 number. The use of the 0845 number by TVP will be kept under review in light of future developments in the telecoms market. An international access number is also available linking to the single number platform on +44 186 584 1148.
- 5.6** Calls are directed to appropriately trained staff by the use of an auto-attendant with self selection by the caller, thus ensuring as far as possible the call is dealt with to resolution by the first contact with the Police. Only where the issue cannot be resolved, will the call be transferred.
- 5.7** Information is recorded and retained in compliance with the following:
 - 5.7.1** National Crime Recording Standard
 - 5.7.2** National Standard for Incident Recording

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5.7.3 Data Protection Act

5.7.4 Government Protective Marking Scheme

5.8 Calls for service are graded in accordance with the Thames Valley Police Incident Attendance Policy⁷, which in turn meets or exceeds the recommended attendance criteria contained within the National Call Handling Standards. All incoming and outbound telephone calls from the Contact Centres are recorded for operational and training purposes. The digital recordings are retained in compliance with current legislation, and disclosure of such recordings is in accordance with legislation and the Thames Valley Police Voice Recording Policy.⁸

5.9 The PECs are equipped to receive calls for service via standard telephony, and soon via internet, SMS text messaging, facsimile messages and e-mail. We also provide services via Minicom and Talk-type for the hearing impaired (01865 846721) and Language line for those whose first language is not English. The Royal National Institute for the Deaf and Race Equality Councils are consulted on the appropriateness of technology, systems and processes.

6. Force Control Rooms

6.1. TVP provides two Control Rooms at Milton Keynes and Abingdon. These are capable of acting as a virtual room with full functionality on all key systems common to both. Operationally, the normal working arrangements are for Milton Keynes Control Room to be responsible for incident management and resourcing for Berkshire East, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes BCUs, with Abingdon Control Room responsible for Berkshire West and Oxfordshire BCUs as well as all Motorways within TVP. The Control Room links closely with the Highways Agency Eastern Regional Control Centre for Motorway and other key road networks. There are also close links with the Fire and Ambulance services within Thames Valley, with a dedicated Emergency Services telephone line.

6.2. The primary functions of the Control Rooms are:

6.2.1. The despatch of appropriate resources in a timely manner in accordance with the Incident Attendance Policy.

6.2.2. The control of incidents by providing suitable resources for the incident type, including the deployment of specialist units.

6.2.3. Utilisation of all key IT systems to best inform attending officers.

⁷http://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/news_info/freedom/policies_procedures/pdf/Incident%20Attendance.pdf

⁸http://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/news_info/freedom/policies_procedures/pdf/Voice%20Recording.pdf

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- 6.2.4.** To provide the initial Command of all spontaneous Firearms incident at Silver Command level, and the initial Command of Major and Critical incidents at both Gold and Silver Command level until such time that Command has been passed on to an appropriate accredited Commander.
- 6.2.5.** To accurately record the management of incidents on the Command and Control IT system.
- 6.2.6.** To maintain radio discipline on the primary talk groups.
- 6.2.7.** To manage the allocation of additional talk groups.
- 6.2.8.** To provide an Intelligence Checks function for Operational Police Officers and staff on patrol.
- 6.2.9.** The Vehicle Recovery Scheme interface.
- 6.3.** The Control Room will provide a Force Control Room Inspector (HBI) at all times whose responsibilities include initial command of Firearms, Major and Critical incidents. The role also acts as the point of contact for a variety of agencies and other Police Forces. The HBI is also responsible for retaining copies of all key Force and National Operation Orders with the appropriate security
- 6.4.** The Control Room, supported by other parts of the CR&ED OCU will provide support when appropriate to BCUs for Silver Control and to HQ Operations for Gold Control.
- 6.5.** Information Technology is used to aid Control Room operators to effectively manage incidents. The Reference Database provides guidance on policies, procedures and good practice. GIS mapping systems provide local knowledge and together with AVLS help effectively deploy appropriate resources to incidents. Airwave digital radio provides an effective means of contact, with two levels of back up in the event of failure. All operational officers are equipped with mobile telephones. Control rooms are configured to meet the needs of policing at BCU and LPA level.
- 6.6.** All incoming and outbound telephone calls from the Control Rooms, and all radio transmissions are recorded for operational and training purposes. The digital recordings are retained in compliance with current legislation, and disclosure of such recordings is in accordance with legislation and the Thames Valley Police Voice Recording Policy.
- 6.7.** The Control Rooms maintain a Hailing Talk Group on Airwave Radio for direct communication with all Police Forces in England and Wales, and for key Law Enforcement partners as identified by the Police Information Technology Organisation (PITO). These include:

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- Immigration Service
- Highways Agency
- Prison Service

7. Resourcing and People Management

- 7.1. The recruitment of staff to achieve the authorised staffing levels is the responsibility of the CR&ED OCU Human Resource Manager. Recruitment of Police Staff will reflect the ethnicity make up of the local population of each site.
- 7.2. Recruitment techniques are utilised to best identify those with skill and aptitude for call handling or radio work.
- 7.3. Staff are recruited where appropriate onto flexible working contracts known as 'Primetime' to ensure staff resourcing reflects operational demand. Key-time and Part-time working is also deployed.
- 7.4. Comprehensive training is delivered to new and existing staff, managed through the CR&ED Training Prioritisation Board, encompassing:
- 7.4.1. Induction training
 - 7.4.2. Initial IT and procedure training
 - 7.4.3. Radio training (Control Room only)
 - 7.4.4. Crime Recording (PEC only)
 - 7.4.5. Refresher training (all staff)
 - 7.4.6. New training on IT systems, policies and procedure
 - 7.4.7. Tutor training
 - 7.4.8. Team training days
 - 7.4.9. Management charter
 - 7.4.10. Other bespoke training
- 7.5. Each PEC and Control Room has a dedicated IT training room mirroring the work environment. They are also equipped as 'live' rooms and are capable of being utilised in the same manner as terminals in the main location with identical functionality, including audio recording.
- 7.6. The PEC and Control Room environments have specific needs in terms of health management and sickness prevention. Compliance with the TVP Sickness Management Policy is a cornerstone of actively managing and reducing sickness absence. In addition, special attention

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is given to the prevention of muscular-skeletal injuries through Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessments, and a Stress Audit is conducted every two years, by independent consultants to provide information to CR&ED OCU management. This enables appropriate action to be taken to reduce work place stress.

- 7.7. The stress audit also acts as a bi-annual staff survey seeking anonymous feedback on a variety of work issues and complements the staff forum. Exit interviews are conducted with staff leavers in addition to TVP's exit questionnaire. This information is considered and assessed at the monthly CR&ED OCU Performance Management meeting.
- 7.8. Workforce Management software (WFM) is utilised to forecast staff needs and schedule staff to match demand. Parameters within WFM ensure compliance with Working Time directives, Force Policies and local agreements whilst also ensuring the most efficient scheduling of staff in PECs and Control Rooms to meet forecast demand. This work is undertaken at continuous intervals of long term (15 months), medium term (12 weeks), short term (4 weeks) and real time.
- 7.9. CR&ED OCU as a key Business unit of Thames Valley Police has achieved and will maintain accreditation as Investors in People (IIP).

8. Demand Management

- 8.1. Sections 4.1 and 5.2 above set out the key demand functions in detail that can be summarised as
- Call handling
 - Crime Recording
 - Despatch
- 8.2 The Resourcing and Scheduling Unit of CR&ED OCU ensures that staffing levels accurately meet forecast demand, utilising Workforce Management software.
- 8.3 Demand reduction is a key element of managing calls for service and achieving business efficiency. Repeat users of the single non emergency number are identified and alternative methods of communicating, including direct dial will be considered. An active demand reduction plan is in place and is continuously reviewed and updated.
- 8.4 Any person who abuses the Emergency 999 telephone system or the non-emergency access to TVP by making false, nuisance or malicious calls is treated seriously.⁹ Such action may constitute a criminal offence and may be referred to the appropriate BCU for investigation. With the authority of the Head of CR&ED OCU or deputy, a request may be made to the telephone service provider for termination of a fixed or mobile telephone for persistent false, malicious or nuisance callers.

⁹ http://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/news_info/info/macalls/index.htm

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- 8.5 Callers using the 999 system inappropriately are diverted by our operators to a recorded message explaining the situation and advising the caller of the correct number for them to dial if they wish to pursue their call.

9. **Business Continuity**

- 9.1. A comprehensive Business Continuity plan is in place to ensure as far as possible that any interruption to business at either a PEC or Control Room has minimal effect upon the service provided to the public or Police Officers of TVP. Key contingencies covered include business interruption due to power failure, IT system failure, building issues (heating, water leakage, etc), catastrophic event (fire, etc.) and contagious illness amongst staff.
- 9.2. The IT infrastructure and telephony networking of TVP has been designed to provide maximum resilience across all sites. All PECs and Control Rooms are capable of handling all call types identified, together with all four IT training rooms and ICT Help Desk. The Control Rooms are capable of handling radio despatch for any part of TVP and each training room at those locations is capable of immediately acting as a fallback facility.

10 **Forcewide internal and direct dial extensions**

- 10.1 It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure that telephone calls into their office/section/department/BCU are handled effectively and in accordance with the National Quality of Service Standards. There is a minimum standard within the National Call Handling Standards to answer 90% of secondary non-emergency calls transferred from the switchboard within 30 seconds.
- 10.2 Key extensions will be published internally on the Force Telephone Directory. All updates will be managed by CR&ED but the responsibility to notify changes rests with the individual and/or department/BCU concerned. All telephone extensions must be appropriately managed to ensure the calls are answered or when no-one is present or available to answer the call is either re-routed to where the call will be answered or an option for a voicemail message can be left. Extensions must not be re-routed to the Police Enquiry Centre unless agreed in advance by the Head of CR&ED. A Neighbourhood Electronic Communication protocol is in place to ensure corporate and appropriate contact management arrangements are in place for Neighbourhood teams.
- 10.3 Voicemail is available on most internal telephone extensions and is designed to enable police employees to provide a quality service to the public and internal callers. It must not be used to avoid answering calls by a member of staff.

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- 10.4 All operational Police Officers and Police Staff are equipped with mobile telephones with access for messages to be left by members of the public. Their operation and use is covered by the TVP Mobile telephone and voicemail policy.¹⁰

11 **Customer first**

- 11.1 TVP undertake Public Attitude Surveys on a quarterly basis and these include aspects of ease of contact and attitude of call takers. All complaints regarding service failures are referred to the Quality of Service Unit that produces monthly performance figures. These elements of public satisfaction are reviewed by the CR&ED OCU Quality Steering Group and at the TVP and CR&ED Performance Group meetings.
- 11.2 CR&ED has a team of Data Auditors who monitor compliance with our Standard Operating Procedures concerning call handling. They also monitor and audit call handling quality issues, including reviewing audio recordings of telephone calls. In addition, the performance of all staff is monitored on a monthly basis by Team Leaders who check a specified number of transactions by each operator each month.

12 **Communication and Marketing**

- 12.1 Thames Valley Police have a Communication and Marketing Strategy in relation to Contact Management. This is a proactive response to increase public confidence in Police Contact Management, taking opportunity to place positive information in the public domain, whilst also addressing internal force perceptions. This strategy aims to utilise all methods of communication including external media and Thames Valley Police Internet for external communications, and Thames View newspaper, Force Weekly Orders, Manager's Brief, CR&ED newsletter (Messenger), CR&ED intranet website and where appropriate e-mail for internal communication. The Thames Valley Police website can be found at <http://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/>

13 **Legislative considerations**

- 13.1 This strategy has been developed taking account of all relevant legal and risk consideration, including
- Human Rights Act 1988
 - Race Relations Amendment Act 2000
 - Disability Discrimination Act 1995
 - Data Protection Act 1988

¹⁰ http://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/news_info/freedom/policies_procedures/m.htm

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- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (and subsequent regulations)
- Anti corruption

14 Review

14.1 This strategy is reviewed and updated regularly with formal review annually.

Portfolio Holder	A/ Assistant Chief Constable David Murray
Contact Management Strategy Owner	Chief Superintendent Liam Macdougall, Head of Control Rooms & Enquiries Dept
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