

Decision Note – Force Contact Centre Growth



REQUEST FOR DECISION BY THE STAFFORDSHIRE COMMISSIONER

	Policing:	Crime:	Fire & Rescue:
This decision relates to: Force Contact Centre Growth	X		

APPROVAL (for completion by Staffordshire Commissioner only)

Rationale for approval

STAFFORDSHIRE COMMISSIONER

Signature 

Date 16/06/2023

Date decision required by: ASAP

If an urgent approval is required, please state reasons:

To meet recruitment/training deadlines

For completion by Staffordshire Commissioner’s Office only:-

Decision Number: SCP/D/202324/002

Date Received: 6 July 2023

	Yes	No
Has the required decision been considered under the guidance of the Staffordshire Commissioner’s Decision Making Policy?	X	
Has the required decision been deemed to be a Key Decision as defined within the Staffordshire Commissioner’s Decision Making Policy?	X	
Who is empowered to make the required decision? Staffordshire Commissioner		

Title	Force Contact Centre Growth Proposal
<p>Summary:</p> <p>This paper aims to outline the funding required to progress phase 1 of a growth programme within the FCC to support the ability to respond to the public through the answering of calls within the national and local set SLA timeframes. It will also allow for an improvement in service delivery through the identification of risk and vulnerability during the initial triage stages of any call, ensuring relevant prioritisation.</p> <p>Whilst the overall use of resources within the Police budget is a decision reserved for the Chief Constable, the allocation of funding received is a decision reserved for the Commissioner under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. As such the decision required is to allocate the unbudgeted one-off additional income of £1.7m, announced in April 2023 post the approval of the budget, to Staffordshire Police with the Chief Constable to allocate this to fund the proposal below. This funding will cover the required investment for the 2023/24 and 2025.26 financial year for this first phase of the contact growth programme.</p> <p>The suggested options, looks to initially uplift call handling, future proofing the department to ensure we continue to meet demand and continue to improve performance. Whilst also enhancing time and space of call takers to correctly identify vulnerability at the first point of contact and within un-resourced incidents.</p> <p>The funding will allow for an investment (phase 1 of the wider contact plan), of an initial 25 FTE (20 Grade E call takers, 5 Grade G Control Room Managers (CRM’s). We would seek to introduce these colleagues into the business within the</p>	

timeframes indicated below (July/August 2023). Phase 1 would allow for the business benefits to be tested and measured against the predictions in performance.

The commissioner should note that this increase is in addition to funding for 15fte approved in his 2022/23 MTFs, the 5fte invested in as part of the 2023/24 MTFs, taking the total funding made available since the commissioner came into office for an additional 45fte into contact services.

Further phases have been articulated in a wider initial business case initially presented and supported at EMB to go forward to be presented to the Strategic Governance Board in May 2023. Additional work is being undertaken as part of the business planning cycle and will be brought back in due course.

Recommendation: Recruitment of 20 Grade E call takers and 5 Managers Grade G – July/August 2023.

Chief Executive

I hereby approve the recommendation for consideration.

This decision relates solely to the allocation of an unbudgeted one-off additional income of £1.7m, by the Commissioner to Staffordshire Police. The additional detail regarding staffing is provided for transparency, and sits within the operational responsibilities of the Chief Constable.

Signature

Date

16/06/2023



REPORT AND ADVICE TO THE STAFFORDSHIRE COMMISSIONER

1. Introduction and background

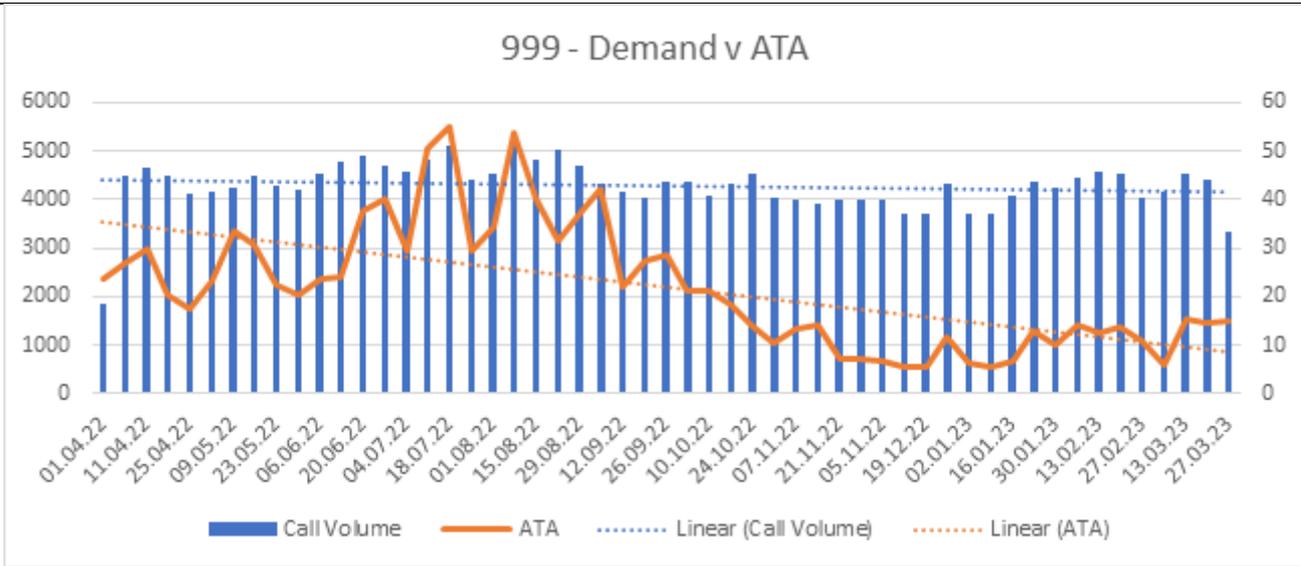
Below is a detailed breakdown of our demand profiling illustrating the current pressures placed on the Command to maintain and ensure service delivery. Concerns are raised with regards the approaching predictable seasonal increases within 2023-2024. Current demand is significantly higher than predicted, with weekend demand regularly surpassing traditional peak periods (New Year’s Eve).

999 Calls for Service (Previous 12 Months)



This chart shows there has been a year on year increase of 11.14% in 999 calls over the last 36 months. This is significantly higher than the demand seen in 2018.

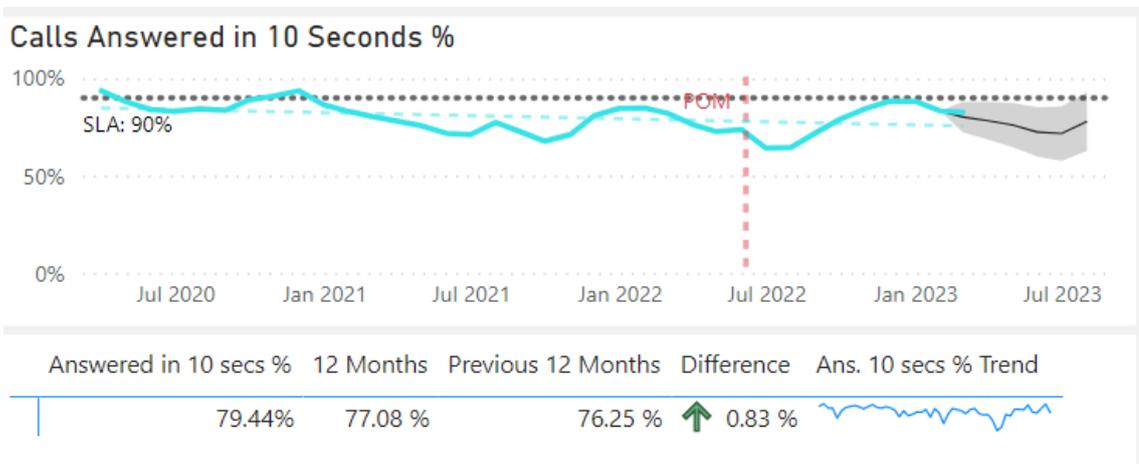
Whilst improvement has been made in the last six months, reducing average time to answer of 14.0 secs, as seasonal demand is now starting to increase, Contact is struggling to maintain service level below that national requirement of 10 secs.



Previous year comparison, up by 18,517 calls.

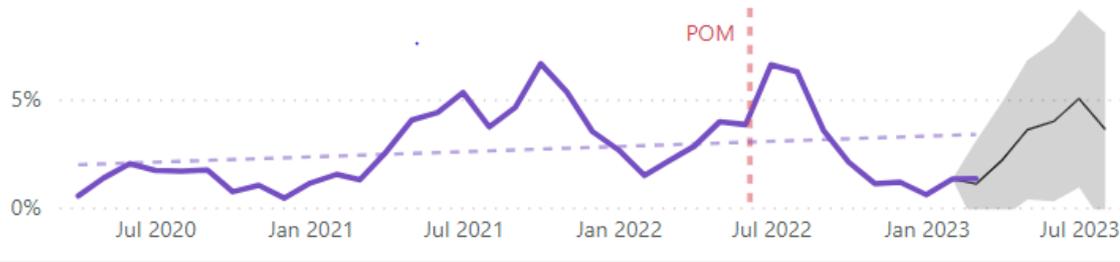
Year	999 Call Volume	ATA	SLA
2022-2023	226,865	21.82	77.87
2021-2022	208,348	24.6	76.3

The chart below shows the impact of this increased demand and that now the SLA for 999-calls has dropped is starting to drop currently at 82.65%, with a predicted analysis of 71.75% in July. The target is 90% to be answered in 10 seconds.



Because of the decrease in SLA this therefore affects and impacts on abandonment rates as seen below (target is below 2%); currently we are 1.33 % with predicated analysis of 5.04% in July, this causes significant rework for operators tracing the abandoned call and therefore unavailable to pick up the next 999 call.

Abandon Rate %



Abandon Rate %	Abandon 12 Months	Previous 12 Months	Difference	Abandon % Trend
2.84%	2.99 %	3.94 %	↓ -0.95 %	

Clearly the impacts of increased demand within the department are reducing the service provided and reducing the public’s confidence in the force.

Next is to look at 101 demand –

Whilst the department has seen unprecedented increases in 999 demand, it has however also seen an increase in 101 demand. It is important to acknowledge however that some of this demand has shifted channel with a lot more 101 demand coming via digital methods.

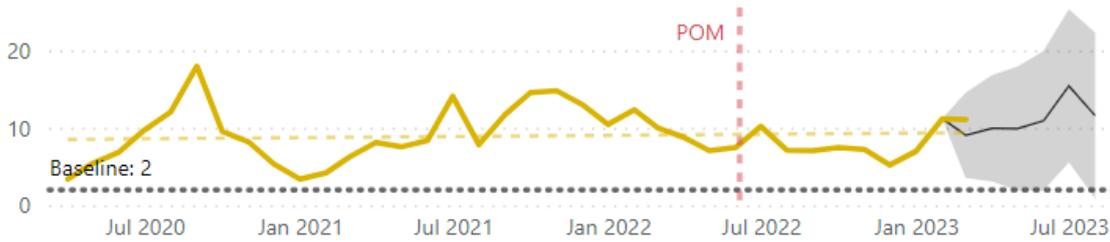
Total Calls



Total Calls	Calls 12 Months	Previous 12 Months	Difference	Difference %	Calls Trend
870850	304051	279776	↑ 24275	8.68 %	

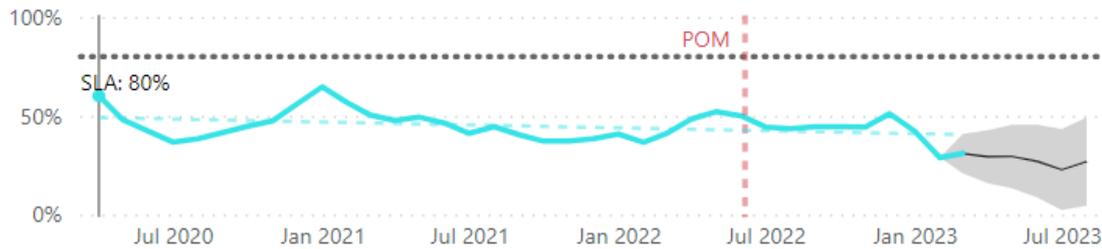
Due to the increase in both 999 demand and 101 demand, this puts further pressure on the 101 service, leading to longer average time to answer which currently stands at 11.04 mins

Average Time to Answer (mins)



ATA	ATA 12 Months	Previous 12 Months	Difference	Difference %	ATA Trend
8.69	7.92	10.92	↓ -3.00	-27.45 %	

Calls Answered in 2 Minutes %



Ans. 2 mins %	12 Months	Previous 12 Months	Difference	Trend
44.66%	43.65 %	41.70 %	↑ 1.95 %	

The service level chart shown above, clearly illustrates the impact of the 999 demand in the department on 101 and how it is further impacting on the SLA provided. Currently sat on average around 31.10% with a downward trajectory to 22.83% where it should be at 80%.

Abandon Rate %



Abandon %	Abandon 12 Months	Previous 12 Months	Difference	Abandon % Trend
32.67%	39.13 %	32.73 %	↑ 6.40 %	

Looking at the volume of abandoned calls it is clear that this is stable. Whilst it sits at around 40.77% on average, the chart clearly shows an increase in recent months with a rapid increase over the summer period to 60.97%.

Digital demand over the last 12 months shows on average the department is dealing with an average of 276 digital contacts per day. This is significantly higher than some of our most similar forces for example; Humberside only receive 6 contacts per day through social media compared with 225 in Staffordshire.

Following a review of our digital platform, the department identified a need to streamline and update the media offer. The aim being to improve customer service and offer a familiar digital experience to the customer, similar to those experienced within other organisations.

2. Issues for consideration

- Being unable to staff the triage function 24/7 results in all 101 calls coming into the department. As outlined already in this paper, triage reduces this demand by around 56% and is vital to support the improvement of demand management. We continue to introduce the function within the BAU platform, training all staff in Triage, but this clearly impacts on overall call taking capacity.
- When there are increased wait times on 101, due to reduced staffing, or the increased volume seen due to failure within triage, this causes callers to abandon their call through and through frustration call 999.
- Managers are often faced with competing demands, having to balance 999 skills and 101 skills against significant demand, favouring the 999 service to ensure we respond to the most significant threat, harm and risk. However, this reduces 101 capacity and results in more pressure within the local services.
- BCM (Business Continuity Management) is frequently being invoked and talk groups are being closed to provide increased staffing to support the answering of 999/101 calls, this impacts on the wellbeing of dispatchers remaining who are faced with excessive workloads. It also affects front line resources reducing support capacity and capacity for proactive policing.
- Incidents reported are growing in complexity which is in synergy with the national picture and not unique in Staffordshire. The more complex the reports requires a longer period of time to effectively manage and resolve, ensuring the identification and safeguarding of vulnerability.
- Call durations for 999 calls is currently an average of 4 mins 20 seconds and 101 calls are an average of 9 mins 12 seconds. The average call duration for Triage calls is 2 mins 44 seconds, this demonstrates the value in this function around identifying risk at the first point of contact and signposting callers to the right place, first time.
- The introduction of Niche has increased the amount of admin wrap up following the creation of a Storm incident. On average wrap up times have increased to an average of 12 minutes for a 101 call and 8-10 minutes for 999 calls.
- Following HMIC inspection we have identified the need to increase THRIVE quality and ensure that all vulnerability is identified at the front end. There is also a requirement to improve the investigative objectives within missing person and sudden death reports. All these facts increase the wrap up time required as lateral and intelligence checks are performed, resulting in a reduction of call taker capacity at a time when demand profiling is increasing.
- On average there are around 3.5 – 4 calls handled per operator per hour. This is often down to the complexities and volume of admin required to log and finalise calls, especially telephone resolved incidents.
- Staffordshire Police current IT infrastructure is out-dated. Whilst this is being developed and we are seeking opportunities to improve efficiency it remains a challenge, exemplified by the introduce a CRM (Customer Relationship Management tool). This remains outstanding with the delivery date timelines increasing due to capacity within the IT infrastructure. Failure to deliver means that all intelligence checks and available information are currently spread across multiple systems, meaning multiple checks by the call taker.
- Whilst we are attempting to reduce demand for front line services through the introduction of Right Care, Right Person, we anticipate that we will experience an increase in demand within the Contact Centre, through the requirement for lateral checks and referrals to other agencies. A question set template will also be introduced to ensure the correct decision and process is followed, again increasing the time spent on the call.

- The AHT (average handling time) for Concern for Safety Calls is 6 mins 35 secs which is 2 mins higher on average than other calls for service. These calls will still be presented to the police regardless of the outcome and these call types make up on average 7% of total demand presented to the force.

Whilst every attempt has been made to maximise the current resilience to meet the demand, we are still seeing breaches in performance. Whilst the shift pattern changes have improved the skill sets balance across the command and ensures that staff are in the right place at the right time. We are still unable to stabilise performance and not achieve current service levels (SLA) and KPI's. With the continued demand profiling and future expectations in relation to the identification of vulnerability the department remains 12% off its 999 SLA and 20% off its 101 SLA.

The predicted business benefits from such an investment.

- Resilience to meet future predicted demand and maintain service delivery in 2023-2024.
- All SLA's would be significantly improved and provide a strong platform for increasing the forces ability to manage incoming demand and also increase the public's confidence (Data analysis included below).
- Ensure improvements in vulnerability identification, supporting victims and witnesses, meaning those who have contact with the police will be answered and supported in a timelier manner.
- It will reduce contacts hitting multiple channels by preventing 101-calls increasing the 999 demand as they will be answered and dealt with more promptly.
- It will allow Control Room Operators more time and space to assess and gather information to identify opportunities to support victims, addressing the current ACoC's and AFI's. Whilst also ensuring the department has the correct staffing for the predicted demand increase seen in FMS4.
- Reduce the frequency of BCM in the dispatch function, whilst increasing capacity and capability in the event of an actual critical incident.
- Reduce the overall requirement for overtime to support resilience gaps.
- Allows managers more time to engage with colleagues through 1:1's, PDR's and therefore provide feedback and performance manage. This in turn increases utilisation rates and identifies any bottlenecks in performance.
- Provide capacity for the Command to support training and deliver corporate messaging (Policing Plan) as this currently presents a challenge due to the requirement to maintain service delivery during shift handovers.
- Support the ongoing welfare project to improve working conditions and wellbeing within the FCR, it is perceived this may assist with retention and recruitment.

3. What other options have been considered?

Technology, specifically around command and control has advanced considerably since 1999 and whilst an upgrade to SmartSTORM is on the IT roadmap to be completed over the next 12-months, this is mainly a cosmetic enhancement and will offer the same user functionality as current.

There are several command and control providers in the market place notably SAAB, SSS (Capita), Hexagon and Motorola, all of which provide call taking capabilities and incident management in one user application. By combining the call taking and dispatch function in one user interface, this will drive performance and productivity through optimized interfaces and workflows, whilst keeping the member of the public at the centre of all decisions.

By having the ROC at the heart of the system, an integrated command and control system will allow call takers to view, accept and manage calls for service, create, update and forward either direct to Niche or to the command and control system for resource. Dispatchers will then be able to deploy officers and complete their processes until the incident has been resolved. One solution will be able to oversee the processes required in the control room from initial call through to the officer leaving the scene. An integrated system will also have the ability to auto deploy resources to incidents via mobile data.

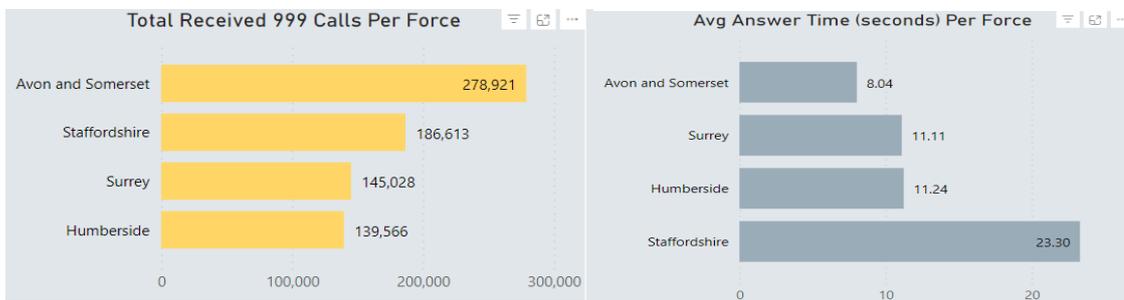
Whilst there is an acceptance that this is an area that requires investment. It has to be recognised the significant cost implications and estimated implementation timeframes would mean that the business benefits would not be realised for some time. Meaning that the highlighted immediate challenges projected over the next 2-3 years would not be mitigated.

Therefore, it is not recommended at this time that we proceed with a new technology system as opposed to a growth in FTE.

4. Consultation and Engagement undertaken

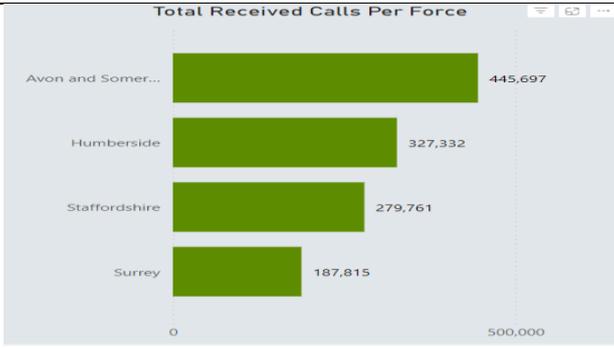
To ensure credibility in our profiling and current resilience is fit for purpose, we have sort consultation with high performing forces. Giving an indication on the measure of how staffing investment can transpire into improvements in performance. We have undertaken consultation and profiling as part of the wider FCR Workforce Review. There has also been significant benchmarking and workforce predictions to ascertain the current and future positions of the department.

Visits have taken place with forces who are considered to be high performing to understand best practise.



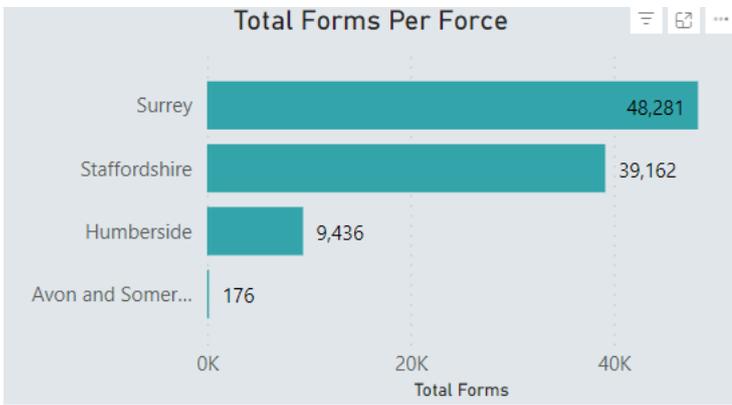
Currently Staffordshire Police is 18th in the country for 999 demand profiling, and currently 31st in relation to average answer times.

101 call data;



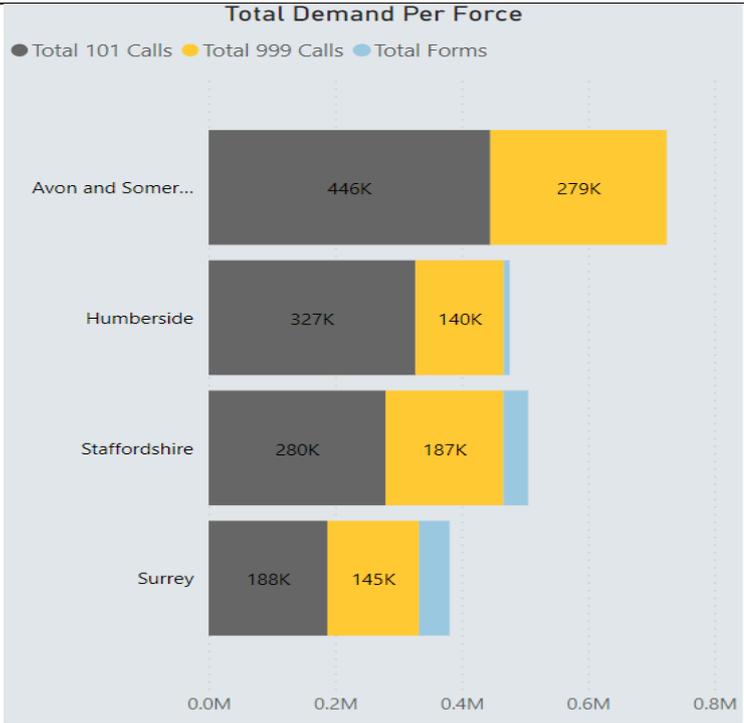
Demand profiling identifies that Staffordshire on average is mid table when measured against the 43 forces (of note Humberside averages around 6 digital contacts per day which equates to the higher volume in 101 demand), 2,190 per year in comparison to Staffordshire's 96,000).

SOH Comparison Data



The above demand profiling identifies that Staffordshire on average is 15th for SOH demand when measured against the 40 forces that currently operate SOH.

Overall Demand



Through benchmarking requests, we have identified that Staffordshire as a significant deficit in relation to our FTE. The above graphs illustrate the investment within those higher performing forces. In the case of Humberside and Surrey they have less demand profiling than Staffordshire, but deliver a significant higher performance.

The below table illustrates the resourcing comparison between the highlighted forces, it also breaks down the investment in each of the areas of focus within the FCR setting. It is important to highlight that each of the comparison forces operate in similar ways, providing a triage function through the existing FCR resilience but choosing to invest in specialist knowledge to support front end decision making.

This investment translates into specialist officers based within the FCR setting, offering knowledge and experience that supports the initial identification and investigative strategy, specifically around vulnerability. A shared practise across the successful forces is the investment in a Domestic Abuse team who are charged with same day victim contact. This not only builds trust and confidence, improving victim support throughout the judicial process. But also allows for immediate referrals to partners who can begin the long-term safeguarding aspects.

Clearly these additional resources support the FCR with the logistic aspect, reducing wrap up times for call takers whilst ensuring sound judgment and response. An example that highlights Staffordshire’s challenge can be found in the reporting of missing persons. Currently in Staffordshire the call taker from the initial report completes both the Storm serial and the Compact record. This on average takes 45 minutes to complete, due to complexities of the detail and the lateral checks required to asses and grade the risk affectively. In the highlighted forces the requirements on the call taker are far less demanding, with logistical tasks being handed to either the investigating officer or a dedicated missing person team.

By raising the above points, it indicates the significance of the current pressure faced within the FCR and the expectations placed on the current FTE. Balancing the need for space and capacity to asses information to make/record informed decisions, whilst also reducing wrap up times to increase capacity to affectively meet demand.

Force	Call handling FTE
Surrey	188 Call Handlers 96 Dispatch 284 FTE
Humberside	112 Dispatch 80 Call Handlers 79 Crime Call Handlers 271 FTE
Avon & Somerset	137 Call handlers 141 Dispatch 14 Switch Board 292 FTE
Staffordshire	90 Call Handlers 89 Dispatchers 179 FTE

National Consultation NPCC Lead

Consultation with the NPCC lead on Contact Management, ACC Todd has been sort to assess both performance, process and resilience ensuring that we are maximising our ever opportunity. ACC Todd provided a view point that based on our conversation and especially when considering the number of call handlers against incoming call volumes, simply we need to invest in resource as our improved position now faces a capacity issue to improve further.

Notably, ACC Todd briefed Chiefs Council in March on the increasing complexity of incoming demand and the need for better informed call handlers who do not feel pressured into wrapping calls up faster. He suggests the complexity will continue to grow.

Mr Todd further described his recent brief to Chiefs Council in March on the increasing complexity of incoming demand and the need for better informed call handlers, who do not feel pressured into wrapping calls up faster. He suggests the complexity will continue to grow.

Report Implications

5. Monitoring Officer comments

Signature

Date

16/06/2023


6. Section 151 Officer comments:

The commissioner and Force were notified in April 2023, post the setting of the budget and MTFS in February 2023, that they would be receiving an additional £1.7m from the government uplift programme on a one-off basis for over recruiting Police officer numbers in 2023/24. As this over recruitment has been budgeted for in the MTFS the funding is currently unallocated and would be contributed to reserves.

As such, and whilst decisions on resourcing are a matter reserved for the Chief Constable to exercise, the allocation of funding is a decision reserved for the Commissioner. Normally this is transacted through the MTFS process. As this income was notified two months after the MTFS no decision has been taken by the commissioner as to the allocation of this funding across the group (e.g. his office or to the Force). The decision required, under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 is for the commissioner to allocate this funding across 2023/24 and 2024/25 to Staffordshire Police with the Chief Constable indicating this will be ringfenced for those years to fund the increase required under phase one of the contact improvement plan.

The commissioner should note that this does create a potential MTFS pressure for 2025/26 onwards should numbers be maintained. Initially the Force will undertake in good time a review of the impact of the additional investment before the end of 2023/24. The Commissioner should note that should this review conclude the staffing is not required on an ongoing basis with the anticipated turnover of staffing in the function a return to the current establishment levels would be achieved within a c.12-month period. Should that review conclude that there is an ongoing requirement this would need including as a MTFS pressure in 2025/26 and require ongoing additional funding from increases to the Police and Crime precept or from additional savings within the group but it is right and proper that this is considered at the point of setting the 2025/26 MTFS alongside all other business decisions.

The commissioner should note that this increase is in addition to funding for 15fte approved in his 2022/23 MTFS, the 5fte invested in as part of the 2023/24 MTFS, taking the total funding made available since the commissioner came into office for an additional 45fte into contact services.

Signature



Date 08/06/2023

	Yes	No
Has legal advice (outside of that provided by the Monitoring Officer) been sought on the content of this report?		
7. Legal Comments: Not applicable		
8. Equality Comments – please attach the completed EIA Not applicable – allocation of budget only		
9. Background/supporting paper Business Case previously shared with SGB		
Please answer the following questions	Yes	No
10. Public access to information?	X	
11. Does this decision involve the processing of personal data? (If yes please attach a completed Data Impact Assessment)		X
12. Is the publication of this form to be deferred? (If yes approx. how long?)		X
13. Does this form contain commercial or operationally sensitive information which is to be redacted? (If yes, please provide details with the submission of this note)		X

14. ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Author	C/Supt MCCORMICK
Signed	
Date	08/06/2023