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March 2022



# **Police and Crime Commissioner for Dyfed-Powys**

## **Scrutiny Panel Dip Sampling Exercise Force Communication Centre Call handling**

### **Panel Members' Findings & Feedback**

**March 2022**

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## 1.0 Overview

At the meeting of the Commissioner's Quality Assurance Panel held on the 30<sup>th</sup> of March 2022, a random selection of 5 Force Communication Call recordings were considered by the Members. Members listened to the audio recording and reviewed the corresponding STORM (Force Command and Control system) record.

The meeting was held in person at Dyfed-Powys Police headquarters.

In the morning the Panel received an input from a trainer within the Force Communication Centre (FCC). The presentation gave an overview of the department and explained the changes made since the Panel last reviewed calls. The presentation also explained the changes in terms of the physical layout of the FCC, an overview of the vulnerability desk, CCTV desk, Digital Hub and the introduction of the Crime and Incident Hub.

The Crime and Incident Hub (CIH) was established to review how the Force could be more efficient in managing demand, to make things simpler and more effective, thus enhancing the service provided to the public. Suitable calls were passed through to the CIH where the caller could speak with an investigator immediately allowing for remote investigations to take place. Typical crimes that the CIH handle were those where officer attendance was not required, or where a suspect had not been identified. This new model for investigations enabled the Force to record and triage crimes more accurately, improve how resources were allocated and enhance the victim experience. Calls transferred to the CIH were not recorded, therefore the Quality Assurance Panel reviewed the call handling within the FCC only.

## 2.0 Background, Purpose and Methodology

The Quality Assurance handbook, available on the [PCC's website](#), states the background and purpose of the Panel along with how the dip sampling is carried out and what the Panel is asked to consider.

### 3.0 Force Communication Call Handling

The Quality Assurance Panel members were asked to review the sample of calls considering the below criteria:

- The call opening
- Establishing the caller needs
  - Logical progression of questions to quickly determine the purpose of the call
  - The call handler explains to the caller what course of action they are taking
  - Caller's needs are immediately identified
- Investigation & data entry
  - Clear, logical questioning ensures that the information is quickly & logically recorded
  - Caller's details are recorded accurately (Date of Birth, full address and telephone numbers)
  - Call handler confirms information and all key points as necessary
  - If relevant information is offered it is recorded on STORM
  - No call-back would be needed as all relevant information captured
- Victim / vulnerability established & recorded
  - Thorough questioning quickly establishes that caller is a victim, be it of crime or otherwise
  - Thorough logical & sensitive questioning establishes if caller is vulnerable
- Rapport / professional manner
  - Call handler from the start of the call shows the caller politeness and empathy

- Starts to build rapport from the outset
- It is clear that the caller is comfortable speaking to the call handler
- Positive service offered
  - Call handler signposts caller to information / services, transfers the call to the CIH or tasks an officer to attend
- Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability, Engagement and Safeguarding (THRIVES)
  - information is recorded in relation to a THRIVES assessment
  - Call handler identifies if the caller is vulnerable/upset and grades the response required accordingly
- Recap
  - Call handler recaps pertinent points either throughout the call or as a summary at the end of the call
- Closure advice / management of expectations
  - Call handler gives relevant advice to caller
  - Caller is fully aware of what will happen next for them
  - STORM reference is provided (caller is clear what the STORM reference is) and text to any mobile provided by the caller
  - It is clear that caller is reassured / happy with service provided

## 4.0 Review of Calls

### Call 1

- Members acknowledged that the date of this call was on Christmas Day and the FCC staff may have been under pressure, however, the Panel felt on this occasion that the call handler did not sound engaged with the caller, no rapport was built and no initial proper introduction was made.

- It was also noted that the call handler asked the caller if they wished to remain anonymous. Panel Members felt that this may have led or influenced the caller to remain anonymous.
- It was also found that some key information was missed from the STORM record, for example information on the new name of the location and descriptions.
- The Panel noted that the STORM log contained contradictory information regarding whether an officer was deployed to the scene.

## Call 2

- Panel Members noted that a good rapport was established between the call handler and the caller.
- Members also highlighted that the call handler was engaging and very reassuring.
- There was a successful live transfer to the CIH, demonstrating a good service provided to the caller.
- Members wished to highlight that the caller specifically stated that they did not wish for an Officer to call at their home address. This was not recorded in writing within the log.
- It was also found that there were some details missing in relation to the victim's actions. Members felt that this information was important to capture the steps already taken by the victim.
- It was felt that it would have been beneficial to ask the caller if they needed any support due to their vulnerable position. It was however acknowledged that the caller was successfully transferred to the CIH where an officer would have been able to speak to the caller in further detail.

## Call 3

- The Panel wished to highlight call 3 as good practice. The Panel felt that the call handler was engaging, explained each step and provided

a detailed recap as the call went on. Panel Members felt this call could be used for future training purposes.

- The Panel noted that the caller was put on hold, but this wait was explained well to the caller.
- The call handler asked the caller if they had any vulnerabilities at their home address. The handler came across as caring and empathised well with the caller.

#### **Call 4**

- Members noted that the caller was offered to talk to an officer immediately, which they considered a positive service.
- The Panel also highlighted that the call handler explained the next steps to the caller very well.
- It was felt that it would have been useful to have asked the caller if they were on their own in the flat to carry out an in-depth THRIVES assessment.

#### **Call 5**

- Within this call Members noted that the transfer to the Hub was not successful.
- Panel Members noted that some key information was missing from the STORM log, for example names given by the caller.
- Members highlighted that the call handler laughed at a statement made by the caller whilst they were explaining their relationship to the suspect. Members felt that this was unprofessional.
- The Panel felt that the handler did not build a rapport with the caller and did not provide the caller with any advice or support to safeguard them should further contact be made by the suspect. This was concerning to the Members as they deemed it as a potentially dangerous situation.
- Members felt that the seriousness of this call was underestimated and therefore the Panel did not agree with the THRIVES assessment stating



there was “no threat”. Members felt that a threat had been made, the caller had been followed and this did make the caller vulnerable.

## 5.0 General Comments

- Following discussions in the morning with the FCC trainer on useful contact numbers for the public, it was felt by Panel Members that it would be beneficial for the Force to promote other emergency numbers and the silent emergency call 55 to the public to raise awareness. Members believed that the Force could promote the role of the police and when to appropriately use 101 and 999 services to try and help the demand on the 101 service and the number of inappropriate calls.
- A discussion also took place on the usefulness of the What3words app, it was explained by the FCC that this app can greatly assist their work in helping to identify the location of calls and vulnerable callers. The Panel suggested that the Force promotes the What3words app to the public and how this can assist their work.
- Following reviewing the calls Members noted that two of the sample calls were from the Christmas and New Year period. The Panel recognised that staff may be under additional pressures during these times and recognised that staff were likely impacted by demand outstripping resources available, which may have impacted on the standard of service delivered. The pressure that handlers would be under was acknowledged and Members wondered if this would have impacted on how often staff were given breaks.

## 6.0 Observations

Panel Members made the following observations:

Observations	Force Response
<p>The Panel wished to highlight call 3 as good practice and felt this call could be used for future training purposes.</p>	<p>I will ensure that the contact handler is praised and I shall request that I use her call in training as an example of what we aim for on every call.</p>
<p>Panel Members observed 2 successful transfers to the CIH, providing the public with a good level of service. There was one unsuccessful transfer observed.</p>	<p>I am pleased that we were able to offer that service. Hopefully the CIH will continue to evolve and help make DPP as accessible and victim-focused as possible.</p>
<p>Within some of the call samples the Panel Members disagreed with the THRIVES assessment, specifically relating to the caller’s vulnerability.</p>	<p>Vulnerability is a major priority for the force. The THRIVES scripting has been completely changed recently as we were noticing similar issues. The Vulnerability question now asks if anyone is affected by the call is vulnerable and the contact handler has to note down what additional support the caller needs from the force.</p>
<p>Members noted that the time lapses and holds were not always explained to the callers.</p>	<p>I will feed this back to the teams as we do advise to keep the caller in the loop about what is happening when we go quiet / put someone on hold.</p>
<p>Members noted that the initial tone of answering the calls was important. The need for the call handler to make the caller feel important and build a rapport from the beginning was essential to make a good first impression. It was felt that this could have been improved in calls 1 and 5.</p>	<p>Agreed that first impressions are very important. I will feed this back to the teams to help highlight the importance of this.</p>
<p>Panel Members asked whether these calls would have been reviewed by a Supervisor and asked for a Supervisor to review call 1 to establish whether feedback to the Call Handler was required.</p>	<p>These specific calls were not reviewed by a supervisor. Our supervisors review 2 random calls per person, per month to provide feedback. I will pass on to his supervisor to review to ensure that any patterns can be addressed.</p>
<p>Members felt that it would be beneficial for the Force to promote other emergency numbers and the</p>	<p>The availability of these services is well publicised in the media, but Corporate Communications may be able to share</p>

<p>silent emergency call 55 to the public to raise awareness. It would also be useful for the What3words app to be promoted in terms of it can assist the work of the FCC in helping to identify the location of calls and vulnerable callers.</p>	<p>something about them to the force’s social media pages.</p>
<p>The Panel recognised that staff may be under additional pressures during Public holidays and busy times and recognised that staff may be impacted by demand outstripping the resources available. Members wondered if this would impact on how often staff are able to have breaks.</p>	<p>Supervisors are (rightly) quite strict about ensuring that staff go for all of their scheduled breaks (they get 3 per shift). We try to schedule a break every 2 to 2 ½ hours, but when it’s busy this timescale can stretch out longer, and they sometimes have to wait longer than we’d like to go on their breaks. Of course, staff can go to the toilet in addition to these scheduled breaks whenever they need. Supervisors can also give extra welfare breaks if someone has taken a distressing call and needs support.</p>