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April 2019

**SCRUTINY PANEL REPORT  
2018/19 QUARTER 4**



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POLICE AND CRIME  
COMMISSIONER**

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

**Scrutiny Panel  
Dip Sampling Exercise**

**Review of 2018/19 Quarter 4 (January – March 2019)**

**Force Communication Centre Calls  
Panel Members' Findings & Feedback**

**April 2019**



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## **1. Overview**

At the eleventh meeting of the Commissioner's Quality Assurance Panel held on the 29<sup>th</sup> of April 2019, Members visited the Force Communication Centre (FCC). This was a great opportunity for new Members to receive a tour of the Centre and to observe and listen to live calls, and provided the Panel with a greater understanding of the processes in place for handling 101 and 999 calls. Since their last visit, there had been a number of developments, including the introduction of the Incident and Crime Allocation Team (ICAT) and more recently, the Vulnerability Desk. The ICAT deals with selected routine low-level incidents over the telephone to reduce the need for officers to be deployed to every incident. The Vulnerability Desk has been introduced since April 2019 to ensure the Force is recognising and appropriately responding to vulnerable victims. The Panel experienced first-hand how calls are dealt with and how the staff work as a team in order to ensure that the information received on a call is passed on to the relevant individuals for action quickly and efficiently. In the afternoon the Panel listened to a random dip sample of recorded calls received into the FCC which had been identified as domestic-related. The Panel listened to three 999 calls and one 101 call.

## **2. Background, Purpose and Methodology**

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

## **3. Force Communication Centre – Review of live calls**

The Panel last reviewed FCC calls in December 2018 and an action which came from that meeting was for the Panel to visit the FCC, in order for new Panel Members to gain an understanding of the call handling processes and all to receive an update on new developments within the department. Within their visit each Panel Member had the opportunity to listen in to live calls being

received via 101 and 999, as well as dispatch handlers sending officers to incidents.

Members were impressed that each call was dealt with calmly and quickly. The staff were highly knowledgeable and demonstrated appropriate questioning in order to dispatch relevant resources quickly. This was evident in one particular 999 call, where there was a possibility of an individual being armed with a knife. The incident was appropriately instantly escalated before being downgraded following further information being obtained from the caller.

In discussion with the FCC staff it became clear that they receive a large quantity of calls which are not related to police matters. The Panel queried whether there was a way to help educate the public in relation to what calls should be coming through to the police and what alternative services are available in order to assist with other matters.

The Panel queried whether any learning can be taken from how other forces deal with managing non police related calls, especially if this is this an issue nationally. The Panel were informed that this issue was being considered by the Force and the Commissioner's office in order to better understand non-police related demand and how this may be better managed in the future.

#### **4. Review of domestic-related recorded calls**

The Panel reviewed a random selection of calls from January to March 2019. The calls were played to the Members via the meeting room's speaker system. Members noted any observations during the playback. The group also had the opportunity to collectively discuss any queries, with notes and key observations being taken by a member of staff from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC). The Panel reviewed four calls received by the Force Communication Centre, three received via 999 and one via 101. All calls reviewed were in relation to a domestic-related incident.

### **Call 1 (101):**

- The Panel felt that the call handler summarised the details of the call regarding harassment from an ex-partner effectively, ensuring that all details captured were correct.
- The Panel did feel that it may have been appropriate to ask some additional questions, including when the caller would be returning home and the details of their new partner. The Panel felt that this information may have been useful in order to safeguard the caller and their new partner.
- The Panel felt that the call handler did provide the caller with good advice in terms of keeping a log of evidence on any further incidents. It appeared that the caller was satisfied with the level of service and empathy provided by the call handler. However, the Panel were unable to reach a consensus in terms of their view of whether the caller's vulnerability had been identified correctly. It was noted that the caller was recorded as not vulnerable, even though they did say that they felt shaken by the day's events and that the ex-partner had been violent toward her in the past. The Panel felt that the caller must have been feeling vulnerable in order to have contacted the Police.
- The Panel also felt that the caller should have been given an estimated timescale in terms of when she was likely to receive a call back and should have been signposted to additional domestic abuse help services and support.

### ***Force Communication Centre Department comments:***

Following review, we believe that appropriate safeguarding advice had been provided to caller. I don't believe knowing the details of her new partner or when she would be home would change the way we have dealt with this call.

The caller was recorded as vulnerable in the first line of text although mention of her being a repeat victim of DV should have been included in the THRIVE assessment undertaken.

We recognise that it is difficult to manage the expectations of callers with incidents graded as 'scheduled' (72 hour response).

In regards to signposting this is something we have identified as requiring improvement. We are currently in the process of collating a list of Domestic Abuse help and support agencies that our call handlers will be able to provide more appropriate signposting going forward.

### **Call 2 (999):**

- The Panel felt that the call handler's communication style with the caller improved as the call went on; it was felt that initially the call handler was not as empathetic as they could be.
- The call handler provided good advice by telling the caller to leave the house and go and wait with a neighbour until the police arrived. The call handler also made sure that the neighbour had locked their door to ensure the individuals' safety before terminating the call.

### ***Force Communication Centre Department comments:***

Following review we feel that the caller was a little reserved in the beginning (believe they were trying to find location) but this quickly improved and provided an excellent level of customer service. We feel that the advice provided by the call handler was excellent in the circumstance.

### **Questions raised:**

The caller stated from the outset that they had a 'marker' on their house. The Panel questioned how much detail should the call handler have access to already by knowing the house had a marker on the system? Therefore, was all of the questioning in terms of the individual's personal details necessary? What is the protocol in terms of marked premises, should giving a name and address be enough to bring up the callers' history?

### ***Force Communication Centre Department comments:***

An address marker ('comments') will provide the caller's name, date of birth and inform that she was high risk of Domestic Violence from her son. The Call handler would need to take callers address before marker would be displayed. This will



then necessitate a verification process to ensure that that the marker is relevant i.e. relates to the person they are speaking to.

**Call 3 (999):**

- The Panel felt that this call was handled well with appropriate questioning in order to obtain all necessary information.
- The call handler gave good reassurance and safety advice.

***Force Communication Centre Department comments:***

Excellent call, agree with the panels views.

**Call 4 (999):**

- The Panel were undecided as to whether the call should have been terminated prior to the police arriving at the scene. The Panel acknowledged that the caller did ask twice as to whether it was ok to terminate the call, but due to the caller presenting herself as very upset and agitated it was felt that possibly the call handler should have kept the caller on the phone as a precaution. The Panel felt that the transcript of the call did not capture all of the details of the conversation. The Panel felt that not all of what the individual had said about how she was feeling had been recorded. Had it been recorded, the attending officers and future reviewers would have a clearer understanding of the caller's vulnerability.

***Force Communication Centre Department comments:***

Following review of the call, we established that the Call Handler asked the caller twice whether they wanted to stay on line, asked were they sure, but caller declined each time. Caller's daughter had not made any threats and was not offering any violence. Caller was clearly upset but her husband was also present in the house to hopefully provide her with support. We agree with the panel that this was not a police matter but assistance was required to prevent a serious

incident. We do not feel that any significant detail was that ought to have been recorded was omitted by the call handler.

**Questions raised:**

The Panel felt that it would be beneficial to have a Supervisor review the call in order to seek their view on whether it was appropriate to terminate the call prior to the police arriving on the scene.

***Force Communication Centre Department comments:***

Following review, we feel it was appropriate to end the call. The call handler had asked the caller twice if they would like her to stay on line but she had said no – to which the call handler respected the callers' wishes.