

Answering the call

**An inspection of the Police Service
of Northern Ireland's contact
management arrangements**

June 2012

Criminal Justice Inspection
Northern Ireland
a better justice system for all





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List of abbreviations

BRC	Belfast Regional Control (in PSNI)
CJI	Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland
CMSU	Contact Management Support Unit
CRM	Customer Relationship Management (system)
DPPs	District Policing Partnerships
HMIC	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
IPR	Individual Performance Review (system)
NCHS	National Call Handling Standards
NCRS	National Crime Recording Standard
NIPB	Northern Ireland Policing Board
NSIR	National Standard for Incident Recording
PCSPs	Police Community Safety Partnerships
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
PwC	Policing with the Community



Chief Inspector's Foreword

The ways in which a police service makes itself accessible to members of the public and how it manages that first encounter is critical in helping to create confidence in the service user.

This inspection report sets out our findings on how the interface with the public had been managed by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) with regard to emergency and non-emergency calls. The inspection fieldwork covered an extended period from February 2011, and Inspectors continued to visit contact management centres until January 2012. Performance figures covering the period before and after implementation of new contact centres were also examined by Inspectors.

The PSNI had moved from an eight-centre contact management model to a four-centre one in a relatively short time span. The move had been managed and communicated well and had placed service excellence as integral to the development of the Contact Management Strategy. The Strategy itself should be reviewed in the light of emerging performance information to include consideration of further efficiencies and improved service delivery.

This report offers some suggestions for improvements in how the service is delivered. There are obvious benefits to the public in returning more Police Officers to front line duties, and the PSNI should actively pursue the deployment of non-police members of staff as Dispatchers to reduce its dependence on serving Officers within contact management centres.

Abandoned call rates had dropped significantly under the new contact management arrangements from around 20% to 3.7%. This represented a significant improvement in service delivery. In addition, the PSNI had performed reasonably well against their target of answering emergency calls within the 10 second target. Performance figures showed an overall achievement rate across the new contact centres of 88.8%.

The good work done by the PSNI in ensuring the right people had been allocated to contact management centres, and are doing the right job, needs to be continuously reviewed. Quality assurance should be maintained at the forefront of the actions of every member of staff in the contact centres. Only a continuous drive for quality has the potential to impact positively on user satisfaction in the long-term.

This inspection was undertaken by William Priestley and Rachel Lindsay of CJI with assistance provided by colleagues from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC). I would like to thank all those involved in the inspection process.

Michael Maguire

Dr Michael Maguire
Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland
June 2012

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) receive over 500,000 calls from the public every year and manage a total call volume of over 2,500,000 from all sources. A project to deliver new call management arrangements (Project Unity) had been discontinued in 2008. However, the PSNI had developed alternative contact management arrangements following consultation with some stakeholders and the formation of an internal Programme Team which integrated the project within an overall PSNI Service Excellence (R4) Programme.

The importance of contact management within the structure of policing is recognised in the National Contact Management Strategy¹ which states that:

“...contact management is a common and critical thread that runs throughout policing. It is one of the most important policing activities and it is vital to the effective delivery of core operational services, which ultimately shape customer satisfaction and influence public confidence in the service”.

The PSNI had moved from an eight-centre to a four-centre contact management model after lengthy internal communication and consultation. There had been integration of feedback gathered during the development phase of Project Unity and the PSNI had incorporated feedback from the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB), District Policing Partnerships (DPPs) and other sources. A more comprehensive and direct input from public groups may have benefited the whole process and could have provided an opportunity to better communicate and market externally, the move to a four-centre model.

Strategy

The objectives of the contact management project had been:

- ease of contact;
- quality of first contact;
- increased Officer visibility; and
- improved victim update.

The project management approach to delivering the new contact handling arrangements had meant that service excellence had become integral to the development of the strategy.

The strategy had delivered the move to a four-centre model within a very tight time frame. However problems remained, some generated as a result of the swiftness of the roll out, such as a variation in staff skills and service delivery.

¹ National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) Local Policing and Confidence Unit 2010.



The importance of contact management had been emphasised by adopting a challenging time scale for delivery and driving it through a focused Implementation Team. Inspectors' assessment of the strategic intent was that whilst the plan had been further developed and refined during the implementation phase, it had been well communicated across the Police Service. Implementation had been managed closely by the Project Team reporting to the R4 Service Excellence Implementation Team.

The strategy itself should be reviewed in light of performance information to include consideration of any further efficiencies and better service delivery made possible by moving to an even more centralised contact management solution in the future.

Delivery

Delay in implementing an Individual Performance Review (IPR) across the Service had hindered the full delivery of the Contact Management Strategy. The customer service ethos had been embedded into the Strategy but had lacked the strong link to individual Officers' operational actions that the IPR may have provided.

The Ardmore centre in Newry covering Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon and Newry and Mourne had been the first of the new centres to go live. Lessons had been learned from the approach taken in Ardmore, and Inspectors found that the communications plan for the other centres had benefited from the lessons learned especially with regard to staffing issues.

There had been no organisational strategy to employ non-police in the role of Dispatcher. If Officers are to be freed up from duties that do not require a particular police skill set, then those duties need to be systematically identified and agreed. Given the benefits to the public of returning more Officers to front line duties, the PSNI should actively pursue the deployment of non-police members of staff as Dispatchers to reduce its dependence on serving Officers within contact management centres.

The non-emergency contact number 0845 600 8000 had been widely communicated by the PSNI, but many members of the public spoken to by Inspectors stated they were still using the police HQ switchboard number to make contact. In England and Wales a new single non-emergency number, 101, had just gone operational. Inspectors suggest that the use of the non-emergency number and the HQ switchboard as a means of contacting the PSNI should be continually monitored and subjected to quarterly review to help assess the feasibility of a move to a simpler, single non-emergency number.

Recently installed customer relationship management software had been applied to non-emergency calls. The system needed to be extended to provide the same degree of management information to inform the handling of emergency calls.



Incorporating local priorities into call management centres that straddled more than one district had caused difficulties. Call Handlers did not have access to on-screen information about local district priorities when dealing with calls. A technology solution was being pursued to enable the display of district priorities on-screen to Call Handlers based upon the origin of the call. The implementation and monitoring of corporate quality standards in contact management had not been fully deployed at the time of writing. The PSNI should fully deploy their agreed call handling standards and monitor compliance through a robust quality assurance framework.

Outcomes

There had been some savings identified through expected economies of scale as a result of the move to four contact management centres. In the long-run substantial economies of scale will only be delivered if staffing composition is addressed. The PSNI should revisit their staffing model for contact management to see if further efficiencies can be delivered.

Outcomes experienced by service users had been variable. However, abandoned call rates had dropped significantly under the new contact management arrangements from around 20% to 3.7%, which had been an improvement.

The PSNI had performed reasonably well on their targets of answering emergency calls within the 10 seconds. Performance figures for February 2012 in respect of emergency calls showed an overall achievement rate across the new contact centres of 88.8%.

The policing commitment had promised to answer non-emergency calls promptly. The PSNI had set an internal target to answer 90% of these calls within 30 seconds. Figures for February 2012 with regard to non-emergency calls in each of the contact management centres indicate that the achievement is around 88%, and live data available from each of the centres indicated that the 90% target would be met over the annual period.

The new contact management arrangements had not been fully implemented. The work done in ensuring the right people had been allocated to contact management centres, doing the right job, needs to be continuous. Quality assurance needs to be at the forefront of the actions of every member of staff in the contact centres. Only a continuous drive for quality has the potential to impact positively on user satisfaction in the long-term.



Recommendations

Strategic recommendations

- Inspectors recommend that the Contact Management Strategy should be reviewed after one year of operation. This should include consideration in the long-run of deploying a more centralised contact management solution (Paragraph 2.12).
- Inspectors recommend that the PSNI should actively pursue the deployment of non-police members of staff as Dispatchers to reduce its dependence on serving Police Officers within contact management centres (Paragraph 3.11).
- To ensure that the handling of emergency calls can benefit from customer relationship management data, Inspectors recommend that the system is extended to cover emergency calls providing a more effective and efficient call management service (Paragraph 3.15).
- Inspectors recommend that the PSNI fully implement their agreed call handling standards and monitor compliance through a robust quality assurance framework. The PSNI should report on the quality of service and compliance with call handling standards of each of its contact management centres (Paragraph 3.21).

Other recommendations

- Inspectors recommend that the use of the non-emergency and switchboard numbers as a means of contacting the PSNI should be continually monitored and subjected to quarterly review to help assess the feasibility of moving to a simpler, single non-emergency number (Paragraph 3.12).
- Inspectors recommend that to achieve a service that takes account of local priorities as effectively as possible, a technology solution should be found to displaying district priorities on-screen to Call Handlers based on the origin of the call (Paragraph 3.19).
- Inspectors recommend that information obtained by the service call-back system should be incorporated into the new Individual Performance Review (IPR) system (Paragraph 3.22).
- Inspectors would recommend the PSNI revisit their staffing model for contact management to see if further efficiencies can be delivered (Paragraph 4.3).



Section



Inspection Report



CHAPTER 1:

Introduction and context



1.1 The National Contact Management Strategy states that:

“...contact management is a common and critical thread that runs throughout policing. It is one of the most important policing activities and it is vital to the effective delivery of core operational services, which ultimately shape customer satisfaction and influence public confidence in the service.”

1.2 The PSNI receive over 500,000 calls from the public every year and manage a total call volume of over 2,500,000 from

all sources. Emergency and non-emergency calls for the most recent period available (February 2012) are broken down by police district in Table 1. This indicates that the emergency call volume for February 2012 was a total of 14,842, with non-emergency calls totalling 37,799. Non-emergency calls in F District appear inflated due to the removal of the switchboard. This means that of the 7,640 non-emergency calls handled a proportion would not have been reporting incidents.

Table 1: Emergency and non-emergency calls made to the PSNI (February 2012)

Police District	Number of emergency calls	Number of non-emergency calls
A - D	8,171	16,675
E	2,280	5,782
F	1,300	7,640
G	1,642	3,959
H	1,449	3,743
Total	14,842	37,799

A - D Districts:

Ards, Belfast, Castlereagh, Down, North Down;

E District:

Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon, Newry and Mourne;

F District:

Cookstown, Dungannon and South Tyrone, Fermanagh, Omagh;

G District:

Foyle, Limavady, Magherafelt, Strabane; and

H District:

Ballymena, Ballymoney, Coleraine, Larne, Moyle.



- 1.3 How the organisation manages these calls in terms of ease of contact, resultant Officer visibility, and providing updates to callers is termed contact management. An inspection of this area was proposed by Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJI) in 2005, but due to ongoing work within the PSNI at that time (Project Unity), it was delayed to enable bedding down of any new system that may be introduced.
- 1.4 Project Unity had been discontinued in 2008 and in various reports published by CJI as well as comments made by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), the subject of call handling/call management featured highly. CJI inspections of *Policing with the Community*, *PSNI Customer Service*, and *Sexual Violence and Abuse* (all accessible via www.cjini.org) identified that weaknesses in systems of call management had caused some problems for service users.
- 1.5 Project Unity had been scheduled by the PSNI to deliver a comprehensive solution to contact management by January 2010. The proposal was for a centralised contact management centre solution to provide customers with a primary point of access to core PSNI services including emergency and dispatch, non-emergency and crime recording services through a two-centre approach. Services were to have been accessed using a broad range of channels including telephone, text, media, internet, email and fax. These channels were to have been well marketed and users advised of all of the options for communication.
- 1.6 Best practice business processes were planned to be employed by the call management function, to deploy the most effective response to each customer contact. These processes were to be communicated to staff and supported by clear policies including a National Call Handling Standards-based contact grading policy.
- 1.7 Leading edge technology was to have supported and added value to the business processes. For example, calls would have been routed to Operators based on their skills and availability; a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system was to have provided a single view of the customer and their service requests; and business processes would have been reinforced by technical workflows that tracked service requests through to completion.
- 1.8 The implementation plan for Project Unity indicated that Contact Management Operators were to have worked within a positive and proactive environment that was designed to enable them to deliver an excellent service to customers. The approach planned was one of a learning environment with a range of training methods; a culture of ownership and professional improvement; overt and consistent senior stakeholder support for the capability; and best-of-breed buildings planned to create a positive atmosphere.
- 1.9 The PSNI undertook a number of review projects to look at various functions around this area of business, including one that scrutinised Belfast Regional Control (BRC) and districts.



However, the remit of these reviews did not extend to a full review of contact management arrangements.

1.10 In CJI's report looking at customer service within the PSNI², once again contact management was to the fore. However, as commented upon during that inspection there had been some developments in designing, developing and implementing a corporate solution to contact management as an alternative to Project Unity.

1.11 The PSNI is currently implementing the R4 Programme. This is a comprehensive programme of work comprised of several projects which includes contact management as one work stream. Each of the projects has specific objectives, has been managed under a project management framework and implemented through the Service Excellence Implementation Team. Building contact management into an overall (R4) Programme meant that there had been good linkage across service areas and responsibilities including technology, estates

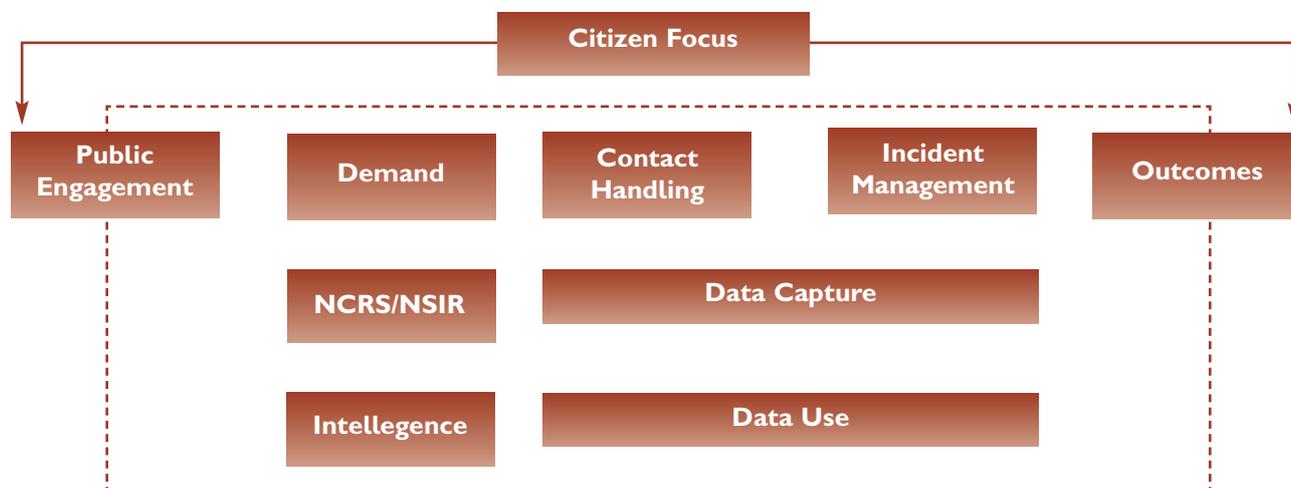
management and resources. The overall aims of the R4 Programme are:

- the **R**ight people;
- in the **R**ight place;
- at the **R**ight time; and
- doing the **R**ight job to make a difference.

This approach follows recognition within the PSNI, and is based on customer and stakeholder feedback that for some time the contact management arrangements within the PSNI had not been delivering service quality and value to the public.

1.12 HMIC has advocated that the customer experience is a process that police forces should embrace from beginning to end; researching how contact with the organisation can be made, through to final resolution of the issue and the impression that contact had on the customer. This ethos has been adopted within the National Contact Management Programme. Figure 1 illustrates the strategic (end-to-end) service delivery model for contact management adopted by the National Contact Management Strategy.

Figure 1: Strategic service delivery model for contact management



² Police Service of Northern Ireland Customer Service, CJI, May 2011.





1.13 Within the framework a police service 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;
- recognise the important part played by staff in determining the customer experience; and
- adopt the national incident grading criteria and definitions from the National Call Handling Standards (NCHS) and ensure that its application is clearly communicated to callers and all staff.

The contact management element of R4 had adopted the national framework set out above, with the emphasis on customer feedback and the adoption of National Call Handling Standards. The primary goal was to deliver an effective contact management system in support of the overall R4 Programme aims.

1.14 The aims of the contact management element of the PSNI R4 Programme are:

- ease of contact;
- quality of first contact;

- increased Officer visibility; and
- improved victim update.

Cost savings had not been identified as a requirement of the business plan, although some savings had been realised as the project had been delivered across the service (paragraph 4.3). The contact management element had been divided into three phases:

- structural;
- process; and
- quality assurance.

Inspection fieldwork straddled the implementation and delivery of structures, (for example, consolidation of premises) and the partial delivery of processes and quality assurance mechanisms. In examining contact management arrangements we incorporate some elements of the forthcoming CJI inspection into 'Workforce Modernisation' which is to be reported on separately in 2012. This report on Contact Management will comment on the situation as it stood during inspection fieldwork up to February 2012.

CHAPTER 2:

Strategic intent



- 2.1 The alternative approach to contact management had been developed following consultation with some stakeholders and the formation of an internal Programme Team. Information that had previously been used to inform the development of Project Unity was also incorporated into the planning of contact management under the R4 Programme. The PSNI had considered feedback from service users and stakeholders prior to the start of any formal consultation process about how contact management should best be provided.
- 2.2 The original strategic intent of Project Unity had been to deliver a centralised contact centre solution to provide customers with a primary point of access to core PSNI services, including emergency and dispatch, non-emergency and crime recording services. This was to have been supported by leading edge technology including a CRM software system to provide a single view of the customer.
- 2.3 The integration of the PSNI approach to contact management within the programme of structural and process changes encompassed by R4 and overseen by the Service Excellence Improvement Team, indicates a willingness to embed contact management within the core of service delivery. Whilst this approach is to be commended, there had been many difficulties in obtaining total integration and the achievement of the strategic aims, ease of contact and quality of first contact. For example, during the life of Project Unity, soft skills training had been offered to districts and funding had been made available to deliver this. All districts except one had availed of this offer. The consequences for the R4 Contact Management Project had been that some staff migrating into the combined contact centres did not demonstrate the soft skills to the level required under the Service Excellence element of the new Strategy.
- 2.4 Project Unity had been discontinued because the funds necessary to deliver it were no longer available. The alternative strategy to deliver contact management had therefore been heavily influenced by resource limitations, including access to training, software solutions and building projects. However, the strategy recognised that continuation of an eight-centre approach was not sustainable and proposed a move to a four-centre model. The intent had been to deliver this within a very tight time frame. The extended fieldwork period available to Inspectors meant that we had seen the time frame adhered to except for some very minor variations. There remain problem areas,



some of which were generated as a result of the swiftness of the roll-out. These are dealt with later in this report at Chapter Three and Chapter Four.

2.5 The move to a four-centre model had been considered after lengthy internal communication and consultation. Considerations formed part of the range of work developed under the R4 Programme and involved assessment of information from multiple sources, including public reports, performance reports, internal monitoring, resource and police estates forecasts, and consultation with other police forces in England and Wales. Inspectors were told that the input of the public had been considered integrated into the development process through the various public reports, information available from the development of Project Unity, and direct public feedback received about call management. However, a more comprehensive and direct input from public groups may have benefited the whole process and could have provided an opportunity to better communicate the move to a four-centre model externally.

2.6 The NIPB and DPPs had been briefed on the earlier, abandoned Project Unity. The NIPB had overseen the development of arrangements designed to replace it, by way of the Programme Manager reporting to the Resource and Improvement Committee. DPPs had also been updated on the new arrangements which had involved considerable effort on the part of the PSNI to communicate the strategy at public and private meetings of the DPPs. Direct public involvement with the

development of the strategy had been minimal, although Officers spoken to by Inspectors had been aware of issues raised by members of the public at DPP meetings and in earlier CJI publications³. In earlier reports the majority of members of the public spoken to by Inspectors had indicated that they considered local knowledge of the initial Call Handlers was paramount in the quality of service they subsequently experienced. The inclusion of contact management within the oversight of the Service Excellence Board had given the Project a focus on issues of quality of service.

- 2.7 To achieve the objectives of the Contact Management Project as part of the R4 Programme the PSNI intended to:
- deliver quality in how calls were handled by operators;
 - implement an intuitive customer relationship software package; and
 - develop and implement systems that helped reduce the number of abandoned and unanswered calls.

These enabling elements were identified as critical in the overall approach to deliver service quality and to deliver against the policing commitments of trying to answer all emergency calls within 10 seconds; and answering non-emergency calls promptly, and if required, to attend non-emergency calls within 60 minutes.

The project management approach to contact handling arrangements had been inclusive as far as ensuring that relevant police departments had been represented and were ready to deliver. For example, human resources and

³ Policing with the Community, CJI, April 2009; Police Service of Northern Ireland Customer Service, CJI, May 2011; Sexual violence and abuse, CJI, July 2010.



estates management had been involved in the project from initiation. This meant that service excellence had become integral to the development of the Strategy within the considerable resource constraints already mentioned.

- 2.8 Whilst many aspects of the Strategy were progressive, the move to a four-centre system as opposed to the two centres proposed under Project Unity meant that there had been less scope to include within the project, a comprehensive realignment of resources to ensure that every opportunity was taken to relocate Police Officers to face-to-face service delivery. Whilst not a specific aim of the Contact Management Project, the realignment of resources was part of the overall R4 programme aims. Staffing of the new centres is covered in detail in Chapters Three and Four, and a full inspection of workforce modernisation to be published by CJI later in 2012, which will examine in detail the other elements of the R4 Programme.
- 2.9 The vision for contact management under Project Unity had been for staff within the centres to be multi-skilled, thereby enabling flexibility of resource management and better service delivery. That vision remained part of the strategic intent under the contact management element of the R4 Programme. However, this remained undelivered to date mainly because of human resource constraints and the reduced opportunities to rationalise staff and change staff composition by adopting a four-centre model. The strategic intent had also been to provide appropriate training to enable the strategy to be fully delivered, but there had been difficulties in delivering

this which will be dealt with more comprehensively later in this report.

- 2.10 Whilst the strategic intent had been constrained by a reduction in resources available compared to Project Unity, the inclusion of contact management as one element of the R4 Programme had been a positive step. The projects linked to it under the overall programme included streamlining justice and the provision of real-time incident recording by Officers supplied with hand-held devices. The intent had been to deliver a system that enabled Officers to keep contact management centres apprised of their availability. This had been identified as critical to delivering a swift and efficient service to people requiring police attendance at reported incidents. Full implementation had not always been achieved and this had a limiting impact on the delivery of the Officer visibility aspect of the Contact Management Strategy. This had been frustrating for service users and for contact management staff trying to allocate calls to service deliverers as effectively as possible.
- 2.11 The strategic intent had been to emphasise the importance of contact management to excellence in overall service delivery. By adopting a challenging time scale for delivery, even in the context of the initial delay caused by the demise of Project Unity, this intent had been realised as the majority of Officers and staff spoken to by Inspectors had been absolutely clear as to the importance of the ease and quality of first contact with the PSNI. Even though there had been less than full clarity as to the final shape of contact management arrangements at project initiation, the strategy had



carefully monitored project milestones and had a strong Project Management Team. Deliverables had been monitored, analysed and fed back to local managers throughout the Project Implementation Team. Inspectors' assessment of the strategic intent was that the plan had been refined during the implementation phase but had been well communicated across the Service. Implementation of the plan had been managed closely through the Project Management Team reporting to the R4 Service Excellence Implementation Team.

2.12 At the time of writing most of the physical elements of the Strategy had been put in place. Figure 2 illustrates the location and remit of the new contact management arrangements. The contact management centre at Castlereagh served Districts A - D. The Maydown contact management centre provided services for G and H Districts. The Omagh contact management centre provided services for F and G Districts. The Ardmore contact management centre provided services for E and G Districts.

There remain issues with delivery and outcomes of the Contact Management Strategy which will be examined in Chapters Three and Four. These issues should be carefully monitored and addressed by considering recommendations made in this report to address them. The Strategy itself should be reviewed in light of performance information and in the medium to long-term, these reviews should include consideration of any further efficiencies and better service delivery made possible by moving to an even more centralised contact management solution in the future. **Inspectors recommend that the Contact Management Strategy should be reviewed after one year of operation. This should include consideration in the long-run of deploying a more centralised contact management solution.**

Figure 2: Location of new contact management centres



Delivery and implementation

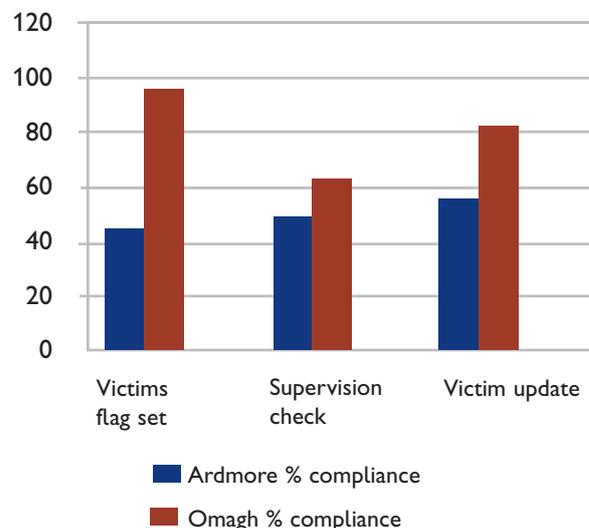


Approach

- 3.1 The plan to deliver the Contact Management Strategy was to do so as an integral part of the overall R4 Programme so that there would be integration of those projects that complemented each other with the goal of achieving effective delivery and buy-in across the service area. In the initial stages this had meant that implementation in E District had been done without a complete picture of what the final outcome for contact management would be. For example, the final details of call handling standards had not been agreed. This had obvious disadvantages for Ardmore, the first centre established under the new arrangements, and the effects had been felt in performance figures (Figure 3) and a departure from what had later been agreed as the corporate approach.
- 3.2 The Project Team had revisited Ardmore to embed the corporate approach there and in an effort to drive up performance figures. The Team had recently been performing the role of quality assurance agents but this activity is in its infancy and outcomes are not yet known. Comparative initial figures for the first two centres to become operational are set out in Figure 3. The metrics used for measuring the effectiveness of the contact management centres operation

included the compliance rates with R4 Programme requirements. For example, inputting data from operational Officers relayed to call handling support functions via the hand-held devices and victim updates completed as part of the aims to increase Officer visibility and improve victim updates. These metrics reflected the contact management framework proposed by the National Contact Management Strategy and set out in paragraph 1.12. It can be seen that upon deployment Ardmore had been operating below the performance figures of the second centre Omagh as regards victim updates. A similar picture for other areas of operation had been evident upon first implementation.

Figure 3: Compliance figures for R4 criteria on initial deployment





3.3 The decision to go ahead with the project before elements such as the call handling standards had been fully implemented, had been influenced by the pressing need to deliver a more effective contact management system. The risks in progressing without finalised and agreed standards had been analysed and assessed as being lesser than the benefits. The Project Team had established ways to incorporate learning from the implementation of the first centre into the other centres. In the main this approach had proved successful. Inspectors observed at first hand the lessons learned from establishing Ardmore being used in the conception and establishment of the Omagh contact centre. The communications plan for roll out of the other contact centres had been greatly developed using the lessons learned from the first centre. This had been particularly effective with regard to staffing issues.

Staffing

3.4 During the roll-out of the Ardmore contact centre, the PSNI had expected to encounter many difficulties with staffing, employee concerns, shift systems, staff grading issues and welfare. These difficulties manifested themselves in the provision of staff to work on shifts to provide the support functions required to deliver live inputting of data. Such difficulties had been overcome and existing staff had volunteered to work in the new live inputting roles. Communication with staff had not been as effective as it should have been which had resulted in uncertainty amongst many staff spoken to by Inspectors. The learning from these difficulties had been incorporated into a staff training and

information programme which had been delivered to prospective staff during the establishment of the other centres. Staff from Ardmore had been used to directly transfer learning to the planning and deployment phases of other centres. The programme included detailed information on remuneration, welfare, relocation and service delivery. The measure of success had been the number of representations and appeals made by staff when faced with the changes required to deliver the new contact management centre. During the establishment of Ardmore there had been 14 appeals, two of which had been upheld. When the centre in Omagh was established there had been a total of four appeals, with only one being upheld.

3.5 The learning from the approach taken to establishing Ardmore included a positive engagement with staff representative bodies. Inspectors spoke to union and Police Federation representatives as part of the inspection fieldwork, and in the main they were supportive of the approach taken and indicated that staff had felt well consulted on the changes. Unfortunately this had not been the case with most staff employed at the contact management centre in Ardmore. However, the programme had been delivered retrospectively to those staff. Inspectors have not as yet established the outcomes from this process but the PSNI had been consulting staff in Ardmore for their views.

3.6 The revised approach to contact management had been expected to contribute to delivering more Officers for front line patrol duties mainly through advantages of economy of scale. The contact management model had



been based on demand profiles which had set the staffing levels for each of the centres. In practice there had been little change in the overall numbers of people involved in contact management across the Service. The compromise solution of a four-centre model as opposed to the two centres proposed under Project Unity had meant that some opportunities to re-balance staff in contact management roles had not materialised. The move to the four centres had generally not increased the availability of Officers to return to front line duties.

(urban), managing calls made in the Belfast, Ards, Down and North Down Districts. This had meant amalgamating staff from the two Belfast Districts (A and B) and the two greater Belfast Districts (C and D) under one centre and management structure. At the stage of implementing the new arrangements for Belfast, learning had been incorporated from the implementation of the previous three centres. Most importantly learning from a similar exercise in G and H Districts had been embedded into the communication and implementation plans. The staff profile for the Urban contact management centre is illustrated in Figure 4.

3.7 The last of the four new contact centres to be established had been Castlereagh

Figure 4: Breakdown of urban contact management centre resources

Resource type	Required	Actual	Establishment
Inspector		7	
Supervisor		29	
Core Dispatcher		60	
Supplementary Dispatcher			
Core Call Handler		63	
Supplementary Call Handler			
Comms Assistants		31	
Contact Management Support Unit (CMSU)		33	
Supplementary CMSU		4	
Switchboard		30	
Totals		257	

Resource breakdown	Police	Permanent staff	Resource	Grafton
Management	32	4		
Dispatch	49		11	
Call Handling	50	8	5	
Comms Assistants		31		
CMSU		18		19
Switchboard		30		
Total	131	91	16	19

Overall Total	257
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The majority of staff and Dispatchers are Police Officers. The Dispatcher's role is to use the information given to them by the initial call taker to decide on the appropriate response, whether that involved police attending incidents or telephone intervention only.

3.8 Inspectors had experienced a generally positive response in the three other contact centres to suggestions that centres should be staffed by people with multiple skills, able to move from roles of inputting data, taking emergency and non-emergency calls, and dispatching Officers to incidents. The response from the serving Police Officers in the Belfast contact centre had been less positive. Most considered that to be able to correctly assess calls and to ensure effectiveness and Officer safety, Dispatchers should be serving Police Officers. There had been no organisational strategy to employ non-police in the role of Dispatcher. However, Inspectors are aware that in Maydown contact management centre this had been achieved successfully with one member of staff.

3.9 If Police Officers are to be freed up from duties that do not require a particular police skill set then those duties must be agreed. In England and Wales Dispatchers in the main are not Police Officers⁴. Safety and consistency in contact management centres in England and Wales are maintained by effective supervision, often by serving Sergeants and/or Inspectors.

3.10 It is accepted that the particular context of the threat to Officers from terrorism is different in Northern Ireland, and that this had meant Dispatchers in Northern

Ireland had been identified as requiring a police skill set. However, to help deliver the overall R4 Programme aims of having the right people in the right place, the PSNI should consider whether appropriate training of non-police staff would provide the skills necessary to safely and effectively assess calls prior to dispatching Officers to deal with them in the Northern Ireland context. With the introduction of quality standards for contact management staff early in 2012 and the deployment of the new performance review system (the IPR) in April 2012, maintenance of safety and consistency in such circumstances should be better supported.

3.11 Training and support for contact management staff had been recognised as an important element in overall service delivery in the 2007 HMIC report *Beyond the Call* (referenced previously). Good performance in training had been identified as:

- relevant and specific - linked to current policies, procedures, relevant legislation and organisational goals for staff at all levels;
- appropriately designed and delivered cost-effective induction and refresher training, available for all staff and specifically designed to support the core competencies of each role; and,
- mentoring or tutoring processes for new and existing staff.

Given the benefits to the public of returning more Officers to front line duties, **Inspectors recommend that the PSNI should actively pursue the deployment of non-police members of staff as Dispatchers to reduce its dependence on serving**

⁴ Beyond the Call: A thematic inspection of police contact centres' contribution to incident management, HMIC 2007.

Police Officers within contact management centres.

Technology

3.12 Some concerns expressed by members of the public to Inspectors during fieldwork for this and previous CJI reports included being less confident in Call Handlers who indicated they had little knowledge of the locality from which the call was being made. Similarly, people had expressed concern that Call Handlers had no access to details of previous calls made by the caller, for example in the case of repeat incidents of domestic violence or anti-social behaviour. Other concerns had emerged regarding the 0845 600 8000 non-emergency number. Despite having been widely communicated by the PSNI, many members of the public spoken to by Inspectors had stated they were still using the police HQ switchboard number to make contact. In England and Wales a new single non-emergency number, 101, had recently become operational. This had been desirable in the context of 43 police forces each with different non-emergency contact numbers. Whilst in the long run it may be desirable to move to such a number in Northern Ireland there had been no plans to do so given the level of investment by the PSNI in the current non-emergency 0845 number. The 101 number had been in use for some time in Northern Ireland by NI Direct. **Inspectors recommend that the use of the non-emergency and switchboard numbers as a means of contacting the PSNI should be continually monitored and subjected to quarterly review to help assess the feasibility of moving to a simpler, single non-emergency**

number.

- 3.13 Technology solutions may be capable of solving many of the concerns that had been raised by service users. Other issues raised involved the use of soft skills by the Call Handler to build confidence and deal with the situation effectively. The move to more centralised contact management arrangements need to be underpinned by having the right technology, as well as the right staff in place to ensure that public confidence remains high. Knowledge of localities, previous caller history and prior offending patterns can be made available to Call Handlers at the touch of a button. Apart from building confidence in the caller, the use of such technology engenders confidence in the Call Handler to be able to deliver an effective service and in the Officer on the ground, in his or her face-to-face encounters with members of the public who have contacted the police.
- 3.14 During the implementation of the new contact management arrangements across the four centres, there had been problems with the provision of suitable and effective technology as well as problems with staff lacking the degree of soft skills necessary in the call handling role. The fact that some staff had received soft skills training whilst others had not (paragraph 2.3) added to the problem of maintaining a consistent quality of service. However, the introduction of CRM software had been designed to overcome some problems of inconsistency and provide Call Handlers with the data required to deliver an effective service. The CRM software had been introduced at the Maydown contact management centre



but had to be discontinued after a short period of operation due to in-house technology problems. Inspectors established that the software had now been reintroduced but had been unable to test its effectiveness or to determine what outcomes had been delivered for service users, if any. The CRM data had not been made available for emergency calls. It is expected that this situation will be resolved later during 2012.

3.15 The PSNI had performed reasonably well on their targets of answering calls within the time span allocated to them. For example, the target for emergency calls is 10 seconds and this had been one of the commitments published in April 2011⁵. Table 2 illustrates performance figures for February 2012 in respect of emergency calls and it shows an overall achievement rate across the contact centres of 88.8%.

Table 2: Emergency calls February 2012

Contact Centre	Number of calls	Percentage of calls answered in target
Castlereagh	8,171	86.22
Ardmore	2,280	91.88
Omagh	1,131	87
Maydown	2,969	96.1

There had been some cases where emergency calls had taken too long to be answered and Inspectors had observed one such occasion at Castlereagh contact management centre in January 2012. Whilst non-emergency calls had been automatically re-routed to the next available operator to help achieve a prompt response, this had not

operated for emergency calls which relied on the intervention of an operator. In order to deliver good service and to meet targets, supervisors need to be pro-active in ensuring the effectiveness of operators. However, dealing with emergency calls requires much more than prompt service. The service experienced by callers needs to be as professional as possible and this can be enhanced by providing Call Handlers with CRM data to assist them in the interaction with often distressed customers. **To ensure that the handling of emergency calls can benefit from Customer Relationship Management data, Inspectors recommend that the system is extended to cover emergency calls providing a more effective and efficient call management service.**

3.16 The rate of abandoned calls is a good indicator of performance with regard to non-emergency calls. Abandoned calls are those which do not reach completion, for example, because the caller hangs up. This may be for various reasons but the most common is that an extension number to which the caller has been directed has not been answered and the Call Handler has not picked up the call to offer an alternative service. Table 3 illustrates the level of abandoned calls during February 2012 for the new contact management centres. This represented a very positive result in comparison to figures prior to the new contact management arrangements being established. Previously the abandoned call rate in some districts was around 20%. The average under the new arrangements had been around 3.7% which illustrated a significant improvement.

⁵ http://www.psni.police.uk/psni_commitments_mailer.pdf.



Table 3: Abandoned non-emergency calls in February 2012

Contact Centre	Percentage of non-emergency calls abandoned
Castlereagh	3.4
Ardmore	4.99
Omagh	3.53
Maydown	3.67

In addition to the abandoned call rate as an indicator of performance for non-emergency calls, the PSNI had set a target of answering 90% of these calls within 30 seconds. Table 4 illustrates figures for February 2012 with regard to non-emergency calls in each of the contact management centres. The figures for the whole year of operation of the new contact management centres are not yet available but with the running total sitting around 90%, it is expected that the overall target for non-emergency calls will be achieved.

Table 4: Non-emergency calls February 2012

Contact Centre	Percentage of non-emergency answered within 30 secs
Castlereagh	88.1
Ardmore	86.1
Omagh	89.7
Maydown	89.4

Standard operating procedures

3.17 In theory the move from eight centres to four would be expected to assist the standardisation of service and Inspectors found that the PSNI had worked hard to try to achieve this. In terms of facilities

each of the new contact centres had been well equipped with display screens and monitors that had been scrutinised by Supervisors and staff to establish call volume, calls waiting, operators free and other useful information.

3.18 However there had been difficulties, especially with the integration of call management arrangements for different districts within the same contact management centre. For example, district priorities had varied and a Call Handler in a centre dealing with calls from two or more districts would have needed to have at hand the priorities for each district in order to direct the call in accordance with local priorities. The initial problems with the CRM software and other factors had meant that Call Handlers had been unable to quickly access district priorities to enable them to manage the calls as effectively as they, or the customer wished. In Maydown and Castlereagh, centres which combine one or more districts for the most part Call Handlers operated within their sphere of knowledge and handled calls from within the districts they are most familiar with. However, in the interests of good service delivery, Handlers had been allocated calls from a district that they had been unfamiliar with. Call Handlers told Inspectors that this had caused frustration for them in that they felt they had not been delivering as good a service as possible.

3.19 Solving these problems could be achieved by adopting a standard procedure for each category of call right across the PSNI. However, there had been objections to this suggestion as District Commanders report their performance to local DPPs against local priorities. The move to Police





Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) later in 2012 will not substantially change this situation and District Commanders had expressed their desire to continue to deliver a local service based on the wishes of local people set out in local priorities. Another approach to the issues would be to ensure that calls from a particular area were only answered by a Call Handler with knowledge of that area and its priorities. However, this would act against efficiency. There needs to be flexibility within the contact management centre to enable work to be allocated as effectively as possible. This is recognised in various reports into contact management in England, Wales and Scotland⁶. The approach taken by the PSNI had been planning to make use of technology to display local district priorities on-screen for all Call Handlers so that their decision making would be better supported by relevant and accurate information. This should achieve an efficient and effective service. Whilst work to achieve this was continuing, Inspectors did not see this in operation and at the time of writing this approach remains aspirational.

Inspectors recommend that to achieve a service that takes account of local priorities as effectively as possible, a technology solution should be found to displaying district priorities on-screen to Call Handlers based on the origin of the call.

3.20 Standardisation and therefore consistency in service delivery had not been fully achieved at the time of writing this report. The operation of the new contact management centres had been

directed by PSNI service procedures such as 'call grading' and 'the handling and management of telephone calls'. Call Handlers and Dispatchers spoken to by Inspectors had not always been clear as to what approach they should be taking. For example, many said that they had been unclear whether all calls should be attended by the police or whether call grading should be applied. Supervisors had recognised that there had been inconsistencies in how calls had been graded, allocated and dealt with. In some areas a system of 'diary cars' and managed appointments had been operated by the contact management centres using existing technology. However, this had not been applied consistently across districts due to different levels of threat to Officers operating such a system.

3.21 Inspectors were told that the contact management centres had been devised on the basis that a version of the National Call Handling Standards would be applied across the service area. At the time of writing that had not yet happened, although Inspectors are aware that implementation of the national standards was imminent.

Implementation of standards is to be achieved by the Quality Assurance Team operating from the centre across all the contact management centres. This is to be supported by Supervisors within the centres who have received appropriate quality assurance training. A technology solution which provided live performance data linked to operational information had also been planned. All of these measures, if implemented fully should ensure better consistency and quality of service across the four

⁶ First Contact, HMIC 2005; Beyond the Call, HMIC 2007; Thematic inspection - Quality of service and feedback to users of police services in Scotland, HMICS (Scotland) 2008.



centres. **Inspectors recommend that the PSNI fully implement their agreed call handling standards and monitor compliance through a robust quality assurance framework. The PSNI should report on the quality of service and compliance with call handling standards of each of its contact management centres.**

3.22 Procedures adopted by Call Handlers and the effectiveness of service delivery had been checked by a call-back system whereby people who call the police had been contacted and surveyed as to their level of satisfaction and other feedback. This had been contracted out to an external supplier during the time of extended fieldwork. This approach reflected good practice in customer service. Feedback had been used in contact management centres by Supervisors in addressing issues with overall staff performance, and had been communicated across centres by the Quality Assurance Team. A system of informal resolution had been offered to dissatisfied customers. This system had not impacted on unsolicited complaints for which the default method of dealing with is through the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland. However, it had been unclear to Inspectors how feedback from this method of quality assurance was to link with the planned IPR system. If there is to be comprehensive quality assurance of contact management, the PSNI need to use all information available to them to drive excellent performance by individuals, and in turn the centres. This includes data obtained from members of the public which would go some way to providing a comprehensive and fully informed individual performance

monitoring system. **Inspectors recommend that information obtained by the service call-back system should be incorporated into the new Individual Performance Review (IPR) system.**

3.23 Call Handlers and their Supervisors outlined an operational procedure that had been having a detrimental effect on the allocation of calls to front line Officers. Operational Officers attending calls in response teams operate a system of 'observer'. Observers had been allocated for the period of the shift with the role of dealing with all calls they had been dispatched to during that period, as well as incidents they observed. Other Officers in the team had been allocated other roles such as driver. Call Handlers told Inspectors that this system had impacted on the availability of resources to attend calls. Observers who had built up many calls over the period of a shift had been unable or reluctant to take on further calls and some Call Handlers had experienced inflexibility with operational Supervisors unwilling to re-assign other Officers in the response team to take on the role of observer, when the person originally allocated had been unavailable – for example, when dealing with detained persons. This practice appeared to be standard operating procedure for the PSNI response teams but is not common practice in other jurisdictions such as England and Wales or in Scotland. This is an operational matter which is for the PSNI to address.

3.24 Inspectors' overall assessment of the delivery of the new contact management arrangements had been positive. There had been some difficulties caused by beginning implementation before all



elements such as call handling standards had been fully agreed. However, centres had been operating broadly in line with the National Call Handling Standards and the final PSNI Call Handling Standards had not been expected to deviate significantly from these. There had also been difficulties with staffing composition. For example, relying on existing assessments of skill sets required for dispatchers had restricted the scope for returning Officers to front line duties. In spite of the difficulties encountered, contact management centres had been delivered on schedule and in line with project aims. In particular there had been successful delivery of customer feedback in line with the framework described by HMIC (paragraph 1.12) and communication of feedback across centres by the Quality Assurance Team.

CHAPTER 4:

Outcomes



- 4.1 An effective contact management system is designed to enable the interface between the police and the public to operate in favour of the free flow of accurate information to enable good service delivery to take place. Good contact management impacts directly on public confidence in the police by delivering a customer focused effective service, not just at the point of contact, but later in the process as well.
- 4.2 One measure applied to the call management system and reported to the NIPB against targets, is the response time to attend emergency calls. A Freedom of Information request answered by the PSNI in 2010 indicated that the average time taken for an Officer to attend/respond to emergency calls had been around 11 minutes and 30 seconds over the years 2007 to 2009. There are many factors impacting on response times but the move to a more centralised contact management system would be expected to reduce them. Better customer experience in their initial contact with the police would also be expected to have an effect on confidence ratings.
- 4.3 Although not identified as part of the benefits arising from the contact management project, some savings had been realised. During the period October 2011 to February 2012 there had been a net reduction of £45,000
- under baseline costs due to the staffing arrangements for contact management. Large scale cost savings had not been expected given that the majority of PSNI expenditure had been on staffing costs, and there had been no large scale reductions in staffing, with either Police Officers or non-police, working within the four centres. Add to that building and relocation costs, and it is unsurprising that large scale costs had not been delivered in the short-run. In the long-run any economies of scale will only be delivered if staffing composition is addressed. The four centres have now been established and **Inspectors would recommend the PSNI revisit their staffing model for contact management to see if further efficiencies can be delivered.**
- 4.4 The PSNI had monitored customer satisfaction with contact management through the call-back system. Inspectors had viewed a selection of responses gathered in this way. The service experienced by callers and reported to the data gathering organisation had been variable. In some instances the service had been described as warm and professional. In others it had been described as being unprofessional and unhelpful. The following comments are examples of feedback received from customers using the contact management centres in January 2012.



Call 1

My call was handled in an appropriate manner by both the Switchboard Operator and the Call Handler with the Call Handler providing me with clear contact details so that I could obtain the correct solution to my query. The Call Handler was very pleasant and engaging and I felt that I was being treated sympathetically whilst the Call Handler listened carefully to my query. Overall I felt that I had received the correct level of service for this enquiry.

Call 2

Although I had specifically asked to be connected to York Road, I subsequently found that my call was being passed around the phone network and I ended up speaking to an individual in the admin team at Lislea Drive. Although this individual was clearly unable to answer my query he did try and assist me and provide advice as to how I should resolve my query. In contrast I did not find the initial female Call Handler helpful and she gave a vague response before passing me, mistakenly, to the admin team. This call did not create a very professional impression with me as to how my query was handled and I felt that the process was un-coordinated and lacked clarity.

Call 3

My call was handled by the Switchboard Operator in a friendly manner before I was put through to a somewhat abrupt greeting from the male Call Handler. After I had explained my query, the Call Handler became much more friendly and indeed addressed me as "sir" at the end of the call after checking that I was satisfied with his answer. Aside from this negative impression initially I felt that my call was handled professionally and that I was given a satisfactory response

Call 4

My call was answered within three rings by a female Switchboard Operator whose greeting included "Police Service of Northern Ireland" and who also asked if she could help me.

These four calls illustrate a variance in the approach by different Call Handlers across the PSNI. This variation in the level of service encountered by users does not help build confidence. The results of customer surveys had been used by the newly formed Quality Assurance Team to illustrate both good and poor practice when delivering training and development sessions. However, good performance needs to be further supported by local Supervisors. When visiting contact management centres Inspectors observed Supervisors listening into calls, dip sampling Call Handlers performance and providing feedback to Operators. Call Handlers, Dispatchers and other staff in the main had been very aware of the potential effect poor service could have on service users. Many said that they had received the soft skills training package and further training during the implementation phase of the new contact management arrangements.

They had been aware that satisfactory outcomes for callers could be greatly influenced by the initial contact with a Call Handler. Whilst staff had said that they had received feedback from Supervisors they had described it as informal. None of the staff spoken to had said they had received formal feedback, or that it had been included in any formal performance appraisal. The IPR system had been due to go live in April 2012. As outlined in paragraph 3.22 of this report linking customer feedback and Supervisor observation to the IPR would be a positive step in providing staff with formal recognition of their good performance or of developmental issues.

4.5 Outcomes had also been measured over a range of metrics which link into the overall R4 Programme. Some of these measures had been directly linked to performance against the policing commitments and Policing with the



Community (PwC) objectives. Inspectors found that staff had been made aware of these links and their role in delivering against targets which appeared initially to sit outside their remit. This had been a positive development but it needs to be supported by linking the IPR for contact management staff directly to performance measured against the commitments and PwC objectives. Measurement within the districts covered by the contact management centres had also included compliance with the R4 objectives in relation to live time recording of crime, victim updates and Supervisor checks. Monitoring and reporting on these measures goes to the heart of good service delivery in that the customer should be able to experience a swift and seamless service delivered by a combination of an Officer attending the scene of a reported crime and direct recording of the details via an

inputter based in the contact management centre. Similarly, victims of crime should be kept updated on the status of the investigation. Recent performance figures illustrating the compliance rates of each of the districts are set out in Figures 9 and 10. Figure 9 sets out the compliance rates for districts A to D in which calls are managed by the urban contact management centre at Castlereagh.

The green arrows illustrate that the compliance figures are on target with the R4 Programme expectations, and in most cases performance had improved over the period November 2011 to January 2012. These measures directly align with the emphasis placed on keeping service users updated on progress, as set out in the National Contact Management Programme framework (paragraph 1.12).

Figure 9: District compliance figures A – D

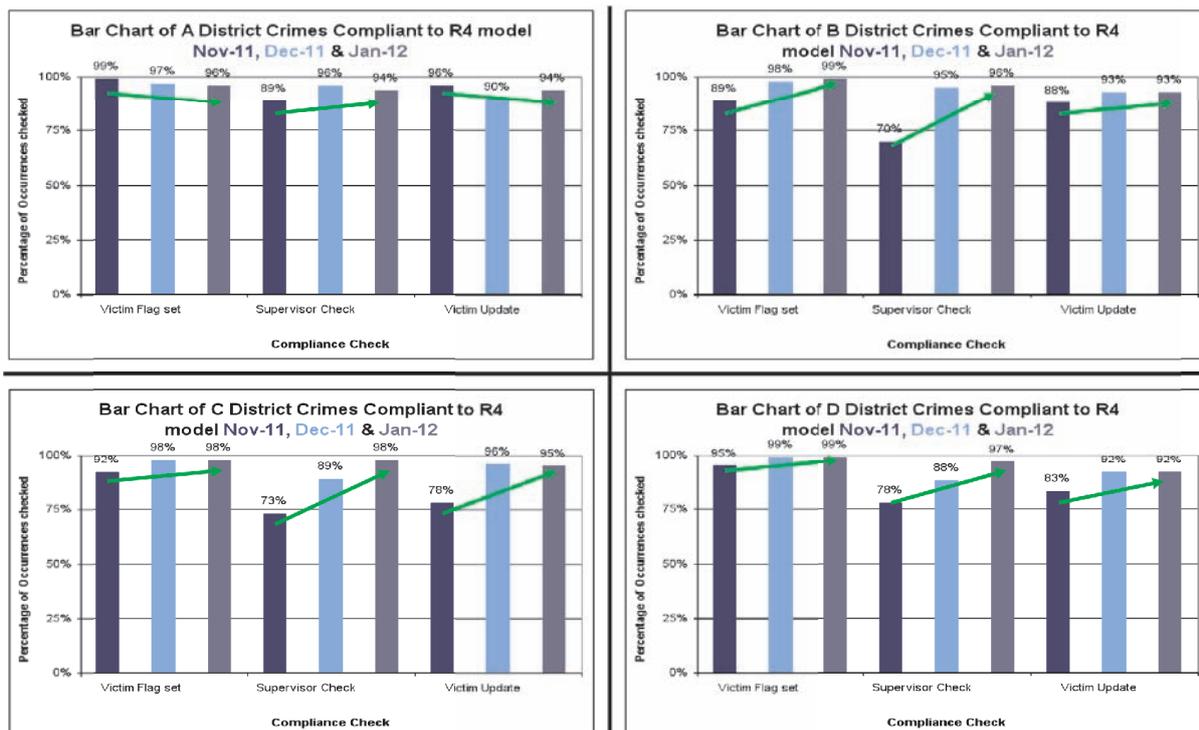
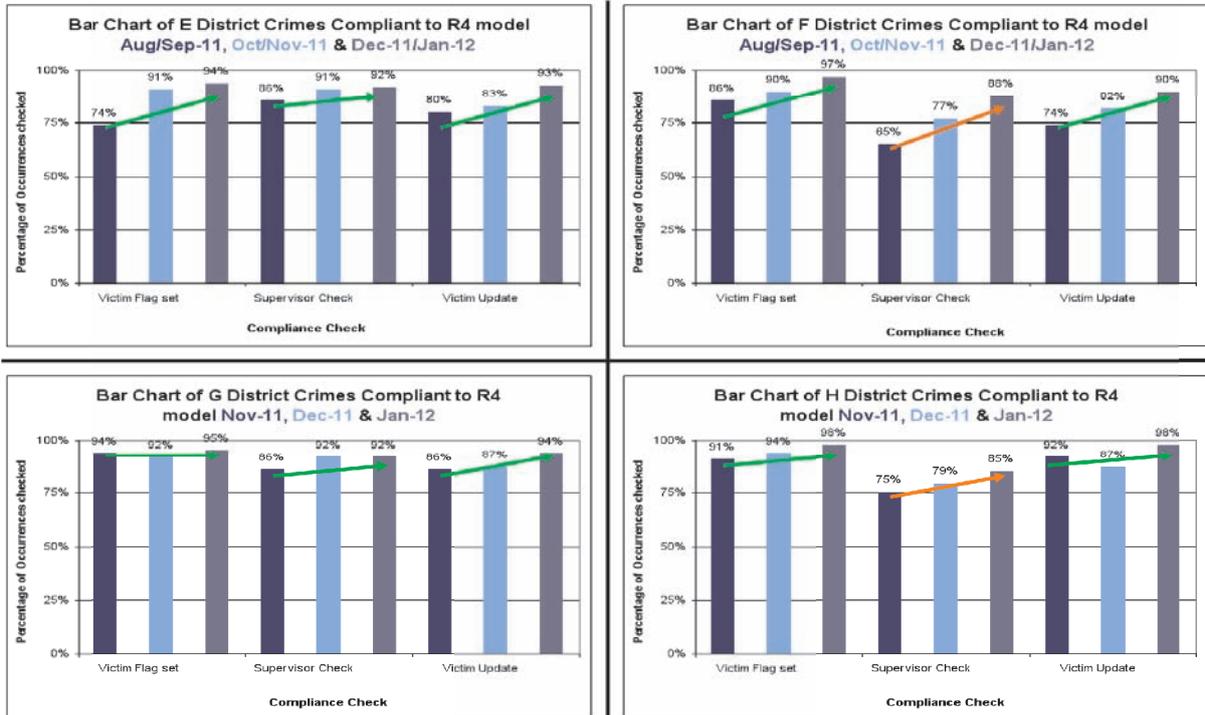




Figure 10: District compliance figures E – H



The red arrow on the performance chart for F and H Districts above regarding Supervisor checks illustrates that performance had been below that targeted in the R4 Programme. Using the performance information the Quality Assurance Team had planned to focus on Supervisor checks in these districts to drive up performance. In most other cases, performance had been improving across the period August 2011 to January 2012.

telephone the contact management centre with details of the reported crime whilst they were visiting the scene. They had not felt confident that the service user would regard the approach as good service or that they would accept that Officer time would be better used investigating the incident rather than recording it. Had there been more comprehensive direct public input that could be drawn on to satisfy Officers that the practice was acceptable to complainants, then initial compliance figures for E District may have been better. However, following intervention by the Quality Assurance Team performance had improved in E District (Figure 10).

4.6 Outcomes experienced by service users had been variable. This was especially so during the initial implementation of the system in E District (Ardmore). Lack of comprehensive communication to Officers and staff, and little direct community involvement in developing the system had contributed to the variable service. Officers had been reluctant to ask complainants to

4.7 As explained in Chapter Two, lessons learned had been carried forward to implementation in other districts. Compliance figures in these districts had



been very good, in the region of 87% and above in comparison to average initial figures of between 50% and 60% for E District (Figure 3). This reflected the good communication work done to explain the system to Officers and to assure them that the practice freed up their time to pursue investigation of the report rather than its recording. Officers told Inspectors that they had been able to explain this to members of the public and the practice had been accepted as better meeting the complainants' needs. The most recent compliance figures are set out in Figures 9 and 10.

- 4.8 Revised contact management arrangements are at an early stage of implementation. The area that has been operational the longest, E District, had been revisited to ensure a corporate approach following the roll-out of the system in other districts. This should help with consistency in the quality of service across the PSNI. Outcomes with regard to improved service delivery for callers and people reporting crimes had been slow to materialise. The work done in ensuring the right people had been allocated to the contact management centres, doing the right job needs to be continued, and quality assurance needs to be at the forefront of the actions of every member of staff in the contact centres. Only a continuous drive for quality has the potential to impact positively on customer satisfaction in the long-term.



Section



Appendix



Appendix 1: Terms of Reference and methodology

Introduction

Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJI) proposes to undertake an inspection of the Police Service of Northern Ireland's (PSNI's) contact management arrangements. The topic of 'call management' was first raised as a possible inspection area by CJI in 2005, but due to ongoing work within the PSNI at that time (Project Unity) it was put back to enable bedding down of any new system that would be introduced. Subsequently Project Unity was shelved, and in various reports published by CJI and comment made by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) in the intervening period, the subject of call handling/call management featured highly. None more so than in the inspections '*Policing with the Community*' and '*Sexual Violence and Abuse*' where weaknesses in systems of call management had caused problems for service users.

The inspection will be termed 'contact management' to take account of wider aspects of public access to policing services; to reflect similar work carried out in the rest of the United Kingdom (UK) by HMIC and HMICS⁷; and to reflect the work ongoing within the PSNI to address issues raised following the demise of Project Unity. The inspection will be based upon the CJI framework which is set out below.

Figure 1: CJI Inspection Framework



⁷ Beyond the Call - HMIC; National Contact Management Strategy - NPIA; Scotland - public Audit Committee Report SP paper 273.



We will examine the plans for contact management arrangements and early implementation in two districts in respect of any overarching strategy and their governance; how they are being delivered and how they will be delivered across the whole service, together with any known or projected outcomes for customers and stakeholders.

Context

Project Unity was scheduled to deliver a comprehensive solution to contact management by January 2010. The proposal was for a centralised contact centre solution to provide customers with a primary point of access to core PSNI services including emergency, dispatch, non-emergency and crime recording services through a two-centre approach. Services were to have been accessed 24/7 using a broad range of channels including telephone, SMS text and media, tetra radio, internet, email, fax, face-to-face (in police stations) and through disability access channels. These channels would have been well marketed and customers would have been advised of all of the options for communication.

Best practice business processes were to have been employed by the call management function facilitating the correct response to each customer contact. These processes would have been communicated to staff and supported by clear policies including a National Call Handling Standards-based contact grading policy.

Leading edge technology was to have supported and added value to the business processes. For example, calls would have been routed to Operators based on their skills and availability; a Customer Relationship Management system was to have provided a single view of the customer and their service requests; and business processes would have been reinforced by technical workflows that tracked service requests through to completion.

Call Management Operators were to have worked within a positive and pro-active environment that would inspire them to deliver an excellent service to customers. There would have been a learning environment with a range of training methods; a culture of ownership and professional improvement; overt and consistent senior stakeholder support for the capability; and best-of-breed buildings and facilities that would have created a positive atmosphere.

A number of projects were initiated to look at various functions around this area of business, including one looking at Belfast Regional Control (BRC) and districts. However, the remit of this project did not extend to a review of contact management arrangements.

Key drivers in contact management as identified by Project Unity are:

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





CJI recently conducted a customer service inspection of the PSNI, and once again contact management was to the fore. However, as commented upon during that inspection, there have been developments in designing, developing and implementing a corporate solution to contact management.

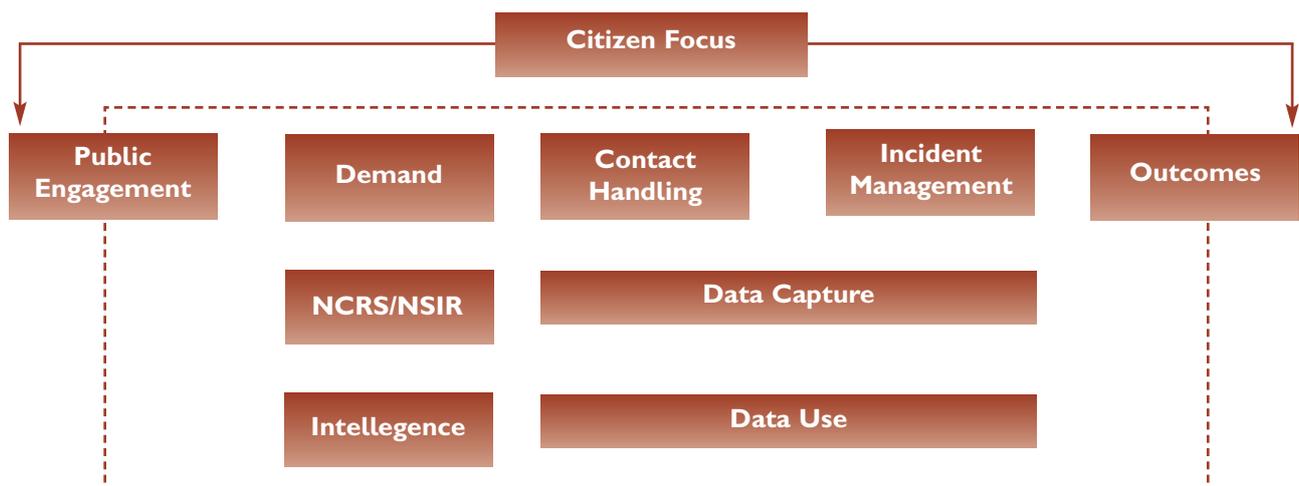
The PSNI is in the middle of implementing a contact management approach that is to be rolled-out across the service as part of the R4 Programme, the aims of which are to have:

- the **R**ight people;
- in the **R**ight place;
- at the **R**ight time; and
- doing the **R**ight job to make a difference.

This approach follows recognition that for some time the contact management arrangements within the PSNI were not delivering quality and value to the public.

HMIC, through various media, has long advocated that the customer experience is a process that forces should embrace from researching how contact with the organisation can be made through to final resolution of the issue and the impression that contact has on the customer. This ethos has been adopted by the National Contact Management Programme. Figure 2 illustrates the strategic service delivery model for contact management adopted by the National Contact Management Strategy.

Figure 2: Strategic service delivery model





To achieve the elements within the framework a police service 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;
- recognise the important part played by staff in determining the customer experience; and
- adopt the national incident grading criteria and definitions from the National Call Handling Standards (NCHS) and ensure that its application is clearly communicated to callers and all staff.

Aims of the inspection

The broad aims of the inspection are to:

- assess any emerging outcomes for stakeholders and customers of the initial implementation of the R4 contact management arrangements in E District which has had the arrangements in place for some time and has been subject to internal monitoring and review;
- assess the fitness for purpose of the arrangements set out under the R4 Programme; and
- identify how it is planned to factor lessons learned in to pre-implementation for the remainder of the districts and Belfast Regional Control (BRC).

The inspection objectives are to:

- examine the staffing models that support the R4 approach to contact management arrangements;
- assess how it is planned to support staff in delivering contact management arrangements with regard to identification and enhancement of skills, provision of training and education;
- assess plans to account for cultural factors in the move to a new contact management structure and how lessons learned may be applied to the full implementation of arrangements across the service area - including BRC; and
- examine the ongoing support given to the project with regard to the provision of suitable facilities, resources and technology.





Other inspections

Staffing models within the PSNI are the subject of a separate inspection led by CJI. In examining contact management arrangements we will also incorporate elements of the CJI inspection into 'Workforce Modernisation', although the bulk of this work will be completed separately. As part of this inspection we will examine proposed staffing models suggested by the R4 Programme within contact management arrangements and will make an assessment of their early impact. During the customer service inspection CJI/HMIC made relevant comments regarding the handling of calls, for example, levels of non-attendance. The PSNI have been aware of comments since December 2010 so an early assessment of how the PSNI plans to respond to these relevant comments will be made.

Methodology

The following methodology is proposed.

Design and Planning

The PSNI have provided CJI with R4 minutes and detailed project plans. They will be asked to supply any further statistics that they have gathered so far with regard to the roll-out of the contact management arrangements in E District, where the project has been implemented and a review has been carried out. The statistics will include any assessment of outcomes for stakeholders (including staff) and customers, levels of compliance, effects of approaches taken to ensure compliance; projected and realised benefits; staffing models; breakdown of staff in each district where R4 has been implemented with comparative data pre-R4 implementation; and a current breakdown of any results for all 24 metrics identified by the PSNI as measures of the R4 Project.

The PSNI will also be asked to supply implementation plans for delivery of contact management arrangements in F District where the project has recently been implemented and plans for implementation in the other districts and BRC.

Delivery

Fieldwork will take place during the week commencing 14 February 2011 and will consist of a series of face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with the following roles:

- R4 Project and HQ;
- ACC sponsor - ACC Kerr;
- project owner; project manager; focus group of four members of the Service Excellence Programme Board;
- project lead and project support;
- Police College - training lead;
- human resources lead;
- technology lead;
- estates management lead;
- NIPSA; and
- Police Federation Representatives.



Districts

E District

District Commander and Deputy; Project lead; Project Team; Project Support; HR lead; Ops Commander; Focus group (min 4) of Occurrence Case Management Team (OCMT) staff; OCMT Inspector; OCMT Sergeants; Patrol Inspectors x 2; Patrol Sergeants x 4; and Patrol Constables x 4.

F District

District Commander and Deputy; Project lead; Project Team; Project Support; HR lead; Ops Commander; Focus group (min 4) of OCMT staff; OCMT Inspector; OCMT Sergeants; Patrol Inspectors x 2; Patrol Sergeants x 4; and Patrol Constables x 4.

G District

District Commander and Deputy; Project lead; Project Team; Project Support; HR lead; Ops Commander; Focus group (min 4) of OCMT staff; OCMT Inspector; OCMT Sergeants; Patrol Inspectors x 2; Patrol Sergeants x 4; and Patrol Constables x 4.

BRC

Project lead; Project Team; Project Support; HR lead; Operations Commander; Focus group (min 4) of BRC staff; BRC Inspector; BRC Sergeants; and BRC Constables x 4.

Interviews should be scheduled to last around one hour with a gap of 15 minutes before moving to another interview if it is to be conducted in the same location. CJI will provide transportation for the visiting HMIC member and two interview teams of two Inspectors each will take part in the fieldwork phase.

To reduce the burden of inspection, those strategic members of the R4 project and other appropriate PSNI members operating at a strategic level will also be asked about the workforce modernisation programme during the contact management interview. These interviews should be scheduled to last for one hour with a possible overrun of 15 minutes.

Stakeholders external to the PSNI will be consulted the week following by way of face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews or by written submissions. These stakeholders include:

- criminal justice organisations;
- Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB);
- District Policing Partnerships (DPPs);
- Victim Support Northern Ireland; and
- community partners.

Should the PSNI wish to receive initial feedback this will be arranged to be delivered to the R4 project board or as identified as appropriate by the PSNI. Following extensive consultation and analysis a draft report will be produced and will be subject to CJI's internal quality assurance processes. Once passed by the CJI Chief Inspector, the draft report will be shared with the PSNI for comment and factual accuracy checking in line with existing protocol. Following agreed



amendments the report will be shared wider as per the CJI protocols with NIPB and other interested parties - in confidence, prior to final checking and publication.

Publication and Closure

The final draft report will be forwarded to the Minister of Justice seeking permission to publish. A date of publication will be agreed between CJI, the Department and the PSNI and a press release will be prepared and shared with the Department and with the PSNI.

Schedule

Fieldwork will take place with the PSNI during February and March 2011 and consultation with stakeholders will be complete by the end of April 2011.

Resources

CJI will be supported in this inspection by Carl Heffer from HMIC.

PSNI contact management	Identify Inspectors and others by initials					Total Days
	WP	RL	JC	HMIC	CI/Dep	
Design and planning	10	1	2	2	3	18
Delivery	10	5	10	5	3	33
Publication and Closure	10	1	3	2	2	18
Total						69

WP - William Priestley CJI; RL - Rachel Lindsay CJI; JC - James Corrigan CJI; and CH - Carl Heffer HMIC.

Desktop research and development of inspection Terms of Reference and question areas

Document review

Self-assessment

Fieldwork



PSNI:

Headquarters/centralised functions

- Deputy Chief Constable;
- Assistant Chief Constable Criminal Justice;
- Assistant Chief Constable Urban;
- Chief Superintendent Target Operating Model Project;
- Detective Superintendent Crime Operations;
- Chief Inspector Belfast Regional Control;
- Police College trainers;
- Superintendent Professional Standards Department;
- Switchboard operators and Supervisor;
- Chief Inspector and Inspector Policing with the Community Department; and
- Human Resources.

Districts ('A', 'C', 'E' and 'G')

- District Commander;
- Superintendent Community Safety;
- Area Commander;
- Crime Manager;
- Sector Commanders (focus group);
- Neighbourhood Sergeants (focus group);
- Neighbourhood Constables (focus group);
- Call Handlers and Station Duty Assistants focus groups (focus group);
- District trainers; and
- Detective Constables from Crime Investigation Department (focus group).

Stakeholders

- Northern Ireland Policing Board officials and Community Engagement Committee;
- Northern Ireland Policing Board Reference Groups (older persons, young people, minority ethnic groups*, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender persons*);
- Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland;
- Victim Support Northern Ireland; and
- Young people's Independent Advisory Group (in 'C' District).

**members of these groups were also on the PSNI's Independent Advisory Groups.*

In addition, visits were undertaken to the Contact Management Suite in Ardmore and to the central switchboard in Police Headquarters.



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