

SCRUTINISING PERFORMANCE

CALL HANDLING PERFORMANCE

Background

During 2003/2004 the Police Authority carried out a series of community engagement meetings throughout Sussex. By some margin, the main theme for concern at that time was the performance of Sussex Police in handling the non-emergency calls. The length of time that callers were waiting was seen as making serious negative impact on local confidence. In April 2003, 66% of non-emergency calls were being handled during one minute (total calls received 50,169).

The Authority adding value

The strong feedback from the community provided a catalyst for the Authority to challenge performance targets and work together with the Force to significantly improve the performance in handling non-emergency calls.

In order to secure improvements, the Authority, through the Planning and Performance Steering Group, worked with the Force to ascertain what the problems were and what could be done to rectify them. The Authority also appointed a Lead Member for the Communications Department.

It was quickly established that staffing levels had to be increased and associated training carried out. The Authority subsequently approved £1.3m additional resources to be allocated to the base budget for the Communications Department for these vital improvements to be undertaken. The additional resources in 2004 meant that call-handling staffing levels could be doubled to 130 staff and the appropriate training carried out.

The Lead Member for Corporate Communications, Professor Gordon Bull, is closely involved in monitoring performance.

Outcome

Since 2004, call handling statistics have shown a steady and strong improvement (with drops in improvement only when crime recording systems were changed). Currently 83.4% of 0845 calls are handled within one minute.

Most significantly, public feedback no longer focuses on the poor call-handling performance and the frustration this causes. The Authority continues to scrutinise and challenge performance through the Neighbourhood Policing Scrutiny Committee and have now introduced a target, for the first time within the Local Policing Plan 2010-11, to ensure the current focus on strong performance continues to deliver the expected level of service to the public of Sussex.

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