



# Devon & Cornwall Police

<b>Force Policy &amp; Procedures</b>	<b>Force Call Handling and Contact Policy</b>
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## 1.0 Policy Statement [FOIA – Open]

- 1.1 This policy has been devised to determine the way in which the force handles 999, non-emergency calls and contact utilising other methods, such as email and the internet. This policy has been compiled in accordance with the National Call Handling Standards and is designed to assist the Force to meet the full reasonable

public demand and provide a timely and high quality call handling and contact service.

- 1.2 The [College of Policing](#) (CoP) offers an online service that provides access to a consolidated body of guidance for policing called [Authorised Professional Practice](#) (APP). APP enables officers and staff to access, or search for, the most up-to-date approved guidance, which replaces a number of previously published NPIA and ACPO documents.
- 1.3 APP guidance should be read in conjunction with this policy. Links to relevant APP modules or sections will be provided throughout this policy.
- 1.4 In the application of this policy staff are reminded of the need to comply with the standards and principles of the [Code of Ethics for policing](#).

## **2.0 Introduction [FOIA – Open]**

- 2.1 Devon and Cornwall Police has a strategy for call, and other forms of contact, handling to ensure they are responded to in a way that meets the needs of those who contact the force, and achieve a high level of satisfaction with the service and improve public perception of how we police Devon and Cornwall.

## **3.0 Procedures and Principles**

### **3.1 Contacting the Force [FOIA – Open, except at paragraph 3.1.3]**

- 3.1.1 Members of the public wishing to contact the Devon and Cornwall Police may do so utilising one of the following methods, each of which must be actively promoted:
  - (a) Emergency Calls – 999  
Life is threatened, Persons are injured, Offenders are nearby, or immediate action is needed.
  - (b) Crimestoppers – 0800 555 111  
To give confidential information on those responsible for crime.
  - (c) Central Switchboard –101  
Non emergency calls, 24 Hour service.  
Non emergency email 24 hour service – 101@dc.police.uk
  - (d) Dedicated Dialing Inward  
Where numbers are published, to contact a specific department direct.
  - (e) Contact for the deaf, hard of hearing and speech impaired should be made as follows:

- Non-emergency – SMS/Text number - 67101

(e) Anti-terrorist hotline – 0800 789 321

The confidential anti-terrorist hotline is staffed around the clock by specialist counter-terrorism police officers and staff. A telephone service is available for people with speech or hearing difficulties on 0800 032 45 39 (text messages from mobiles are not accepted).

**(For further guidance in relation to police telephone numbers for those who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired, please use the following link to the PIRATES A – Z)**

[Police numbers for the deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired](#)

Live chat via the Devon & Cornwall Police website - <https://www.devon-cornwall.police.uk/contact/>

3.1.2 The above numbers are published in all BT telephone books throughout Devon and Cornwall and in various marketing material.

3.1.3 **[FOIA – Closed s.31(1)(a)]**

**3.2 [FOIA – Closed s.31(1)(a)]**

**3.3 Crimestoppers [FOIA – Open]**

3.3.1 The free and confidential 'Crimestoppers' telephone line 0800 555 111 is staffed from 0700 hours to 0000 hours 7 days a week, to receive calls from members of the public. Outside of these hours, the line is diverted to a centralised call handling bureau at the Metropolitan Police who take calls for Crimestoppers from the whole country. Members of the public can also report information anonymously by completing an online form.

3.3.2 In order to make the most effective use of this facility and the skills of those who staff it, the 'Crimestoppers' number 0800 555 111 will be used as the contact number in all appeals to the public through the media.

3.3.3 Whenever possible, the 'Crimestoppers' staff should be informed of the details of any case that is to be made the subject of an appeal for information **before** that appeal is made to the media.

**3.4 Force Telephone Switchboard [FOIA – Open, except at paragraph 3.4.2]**

3.4.1 The Force Telephone Switchboard receives calls made via the 101 service. It is in operation 24 hours a day but is staffed according to demand and the times of the day. Callers to the 101 service may be answered primarily at the Switchboard, or if in 'night service' then by other CMCU staff within the Force Control Room or direct to a Force Contact Centre call handler.

3.4.2 **[FOIA – Closed s.31(1)(a)]**

3.4.3 Staff requiring Directory Enquiries can use directory enquiries on the internet. This is only to be used for business reasons and should be noted that the internet system has an audit trail, which will be regularly monitored.

**3.5 Force Contact Centres [FOIA – Open]**

3.5.1 The Force Contact Centres are staffed 24 hours a day to receive calls from members of the public, connected via the switchboard. They will also receive and deal with emails sent to the contact centre via a link from the Force Website or using the published email address: [101@dc.police.uk](mailto:101@dc.police.uk)

3.5.2 The aim of the Force Contact Centre is to provide a service to the community and to compliment the current policing commitment.

3.5.3 Call Handlers will use their discretion and professional judgment to make an immediate decision whether or not a police resource will attend. Use of the National Decision Model (NDM) and THRIVE aims to assist staff in making operational decisions based upon organisational values and professional judgment rather than being driven solely by policy and procedures. Please refer to [D051 Grading and Deployment policy](#), and APP > [National Decision Model](#).

3.5.4 Demand Reduction Team (DRT) constables will be contained within the Contact Centre to receive calls from the public between 0800-2200 (subject to dynamic review). Their aim will be to desktop resolve incidents at the first point of contact with the public in an efficient and effective manner, which requires a police officer's involvement, and will offer advice and support to the call handlers.

DRT officers will have the discretion to make an immediate decision whether or not a Police resource will attend. Use of the NDM aims to assist police officers in making operational decisions based upon organisational values and professional judgment, rather than being driven solely by policy and procedures. Please refer to [D051 Grading and Deployment policy](#), and APP > [National Decision Model](#).

3.5.5 DRT officers will assess and close STORM call cards for those incidents that have been allocated and resolved via the Appointments system, however, this should ordinarily be carried out by the allocated officer. If DRT officers are unable to ascertain the status due to an absence of an update or being unable to contact the caller, a STORM Tag (APPT) should be appended to the call card. The APPT tag generates an automated email to the relevant LPA SPOC for appropriate follow up action.

3.5.6 DRT officers will deal with calls from members of the public who wish to make Complaints against Police via a telephone appointment basis using the diary functionality within STORM.

- 3.5.7 DRT officers will assume primacy for dealing with all reports of missing persons within the Contact Centre. If no DRT officers are available, calls will be diverted to the next available Call Handler.
- 3.5.8 The Contact Centre Functions are:
- (a) To deal with **non-emergency** enquiries from the public to resolve the optimum number of requests for service at the first point of contact without the need to deploy unnecessary and inappropriate resources.
  - (b) To directly input minor crime to UNIFI where appropriate, in accordance with Force Policy [D024 Crime Reporting](#).
  - (c) To deal with emergency calls (999) from members of the public, to log calls appropriately and to arrange appropriate police response
- 3.5.9 Offences reported by members of the public that are considered **inappropriate** for direct input onto UNIFI, will not be recorded by Call Handling Staff or desktop resolution constables on UNIFI. Details of offences are contained within policy document [D024](#). The same procedure will also apply to Police Enquiry Officers (PEOs) who may accept complaints from the public at police stations.
- 3.5.10 Operators will create incident logs only where necessary (see Force Grading and Deployment Policy [D051](#)) and if suitable make an appointment, or pass them to the relevant destination Resource Deployment Officer.
- 3.5.11 It is accepted that there will be occasions when documents will have to be viewed during the course of the reporting process. In such situations a member of the public will need to attend a Police Station or an appointment can be made.

### **3.6 Dedicated Dialing Inward (DDI) [FOIA – Open]**

- 3.6.1 LPAs, Police Stations, Departments, Sections and individuals, as appropriate, have Dedicated Dialing Inward (DDI) facility and should ensure that the number appears on all outgoing correspondence. Similarly, representatives of partner agencies, regular callers to such departments, and individuals must be provided with that DDI number.
- 3.6.2 Where DDI numbers are published in public directories all staff must be aware that a call on that number is most likely to be from a member of the public.
- 3.6.3 Force employees phoning in on public lines must use the appropriate DDI numbers for the office or individual required.
- 3.6.4 Increase in DDI use results in a subsequent decrease in the calls handled by the switchboard, and this ensures quicker response times by the Force Contact Centre.

3.6.5 All Airwave handsets can be called direct from any Force extension by dialing '88' followed by the users' five figure force number. These are known as Airex numbers. Please note that for members of the Special Constabulary, please replace the leading 7 with a '0' when dialing these numbers.

### **3.7 Telephone Facilities [FOIA – Open]**

3.7.1 All staff must make themselves familiar with the technical facilities which exist and utilise them to ensure that no extension remains unanswered. Facilities may include automatic call diverting on no reply, call pick-up from other extension, BT Callminder, Voicemail or answer machine. Enquiries regarding facilities should be directed to Customer Service Centre. (See the Intranet for instructions on using and setting up Voicemail Messages and [BT Callminder](#)). Members of staff should endeavour to answer their telephone when it rings. Voicemail and answering facilities are a fallback for those occasions where an individual or teams are unable to answer their extension.

3.7.2 Voicemail will be mandatory on all telephones other than those specified at 3.8.5 and will be set up with an external message.

3.7.3 Voicemail messages should be checked at least twice during a tour of duty.

### **3.8 Greetings [FOIA – Open]**

3.8.1 Voicemail or BT Callminder on Individuals extensions will use the following as a recorded message for their external greeting:

'Thank you for calling xxxx name, job title xxxxx, I am not available to take your call at the moment, please leave your name, contact number and availability after the tone and I will return your call.'

3.8.2 Voicemail or BT Callminder at Police Station Enquiry Offices will use the following as a recorded message for their external greeting:

'Thank you for calling xxxx police station, we are not available to take your call at the moment, if your call is an emergency please dial 999, otherwise, please leave your name, contact number and availability after the tone and we will return your call.'

3.8.3 Voicemail or BT Callminder for Administrative Departments will use the following as a recorded message:

'Thank you for calling xxxx name and department xxxx, I/we are not available to take your call at the moment, if your call is an emergency please dial 999, otherwise, please leave your name, contact number and availability after the tone and I/we will return your call.'

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- 3.8.4 Specific instructions relating to your area of business may be added after the above. Users of voicemail also have the option to create an internal message, which should contain the above and any additional information for internal customers.
- 3.8.5 Voicemail messages should **not** routinely invite callers to dial 101 as an alternative other than in circumstances as at 3.8.12.
- 3.8.6 Parade/Briefing Rooms, Custody Centres and Control Rooms should not activate Voicemail systems.
- 3.8.7 Telephone extensions that will not be attended for more than 24 hours, e.g. Annual Leave, courses or other absence will ensure that a temporary greeting is recorded on the voicemail system outlining the length of absence and alternative arrangements if the matter requires more urgent attention.
- 3.8.8 Supervisors of staff who are sick or absent from duty should make arrangements with that member of staff for access to their voicemail facility and should action those messages in their absence.
- 3.8.9 All Police enquiry office and Police Enquiry Officer voicemail should be checked regularly during every 24 hour period. Where the station enquiry officer is absent, arrangements must be made to service voicemail messages as per 3.8.8.
- 3.8.10 Officers and police staff receiving a call direct or via Voicemail or BT Callminder must take ownership and responsibility for the call and deal with the enquiry promptly.
- 3.8.11 International telephone calls will be monitored and recorded using the technical equipment existing in the Force. Dial out facilities for International telephone calls are restricted. Access can be gained primarily from Inspectors and above telephone lines in most Police Stations. Assistance in making an International Call should be directed to ICT for advise on the nearest non-restricted telephone line. The Central Switchboard should not be contacted to assist.
- 3.8.12 All Airwave Handsets that have an 0845 DDI number also have a voice mailbox. Calls will automatically divert from the handset to the mailbox after seven rings if the user is busy or unavailable. Airwave users should check their mailbox at least twice during a tour of duty (dial 5000 from Airwave handset or any force extension for new messages). For further information on Airwave and its telephony functionality, refer to the Telephony [intranet site](#).
- 3.8.13 Airwave voicemail users will use the following as a recorded message:
- 'Thank you for calling xxxx name and station xxx I am not available to take your call at the moment, if your call is an emergency please dial 999, otherwise, please leave your name, contact number and availability after the tone and I will return your call. Please bear in mind if leaving a message, (that I work shifts) and may not be in a

position to return your call for some time. If you need a more urgent response, please dial 101.'

### **3.9 Standards of Call Handling [FOIA – Open]**

- 3.9.1 Staff handling calls will act with integrity and treat everyone they deal with fairly and openly. Callers will be treated politely and with respect and callers concerns will be taken seriously. Call Handlers will explain what the police are doing to address the callers concerns, including whether or not police will be taking action and why.
- 3.9.2 The Devon and Cornwall Police Force will, in line with National Call handling standards, always give priority to emergencies, however, it is recognised that the public may contact the police for many different reasons. Staff will ensure:
- (a) They understand what the caller is telling them, and wherever possible provide the caller with a reference number.
  - (b) Where the caller's enquiry requires specialist knowledge or expertise, their incident/enquiry will be transferred to the appropriate named person or department to deal with the enquiry.
  - (c) Where the appropriate person is not on duty and/or their call cannot be connected, tell the caller of the delay and give the opportunity for the caller to leave a message. The caller will be made aware of the likely length of time it will before someone will respond to their message.
  - (d) If the report is a slow time routine non crime incident that cannot be resolved and requires the attendance of a police officer then a call card will be created as per [D051](#). Appointments will be made in accordance with [D051](#).
  - (e) Where the caller's enquiry is about something the police cannot deal with, tell the caller if there is another organisation that can help them and if so, how to get in touch with them.
  - (f) Near the conclusion of the call, the call handler should ask 'Have you any concerns I haven't covered' or 'Is there anything else I can help you with?' to ensure that the callers concerns have been addressed.
  - (g) On all logs reporting anti-social behavior and /or non-crime incidents, the call handler will ask the caller how they would like to be updated. Please ensure that an email address is obtained (if one available) and append to the call card under Contact details.

### **3.10 Emergency/999 Calls [FOIA – Open]**

- 3.10.1 A genuine emergency (999) call is one relating to any incident or occurrence in which:

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- (a) Life is threatened
- (b) Persons are injured
- (c) Offenders are nearby
- (d) Immediate action is needed

- 3.10.2 999 calls will be the first priority for all call handling staff.
- 3.10.3 999 calls will result in the creation of a call card where necessary (refer to Force Grading and Deployment Policy [D051](#)) or have the details entered on an existing call card relating to the same subject or incident.
- 3.10.4 If a 999 call is received for another Force area, the details of the incident will be taken, logged and forwarded to the appropriate Force.
- 3.10.5 **Silent 999 calls received from mobile phones:**  
999 calls received from mobile phones which have no background sounds at all or calls with background sounds but no speech, e.g., passing traffic, footsteps will be transferred by BT to the 'Silent Solution' service where the caller is requested to press '55' on their phone to indicate that they have an emergency. If 55 is detected, BT will connect the call to the Police. BT Repeat Call Counter flags silent calls from the same mobile phone within a 30 minute period. On receipt of the third silent call from a mobile, the BT Operator will connect the call to Police announcing 'BT connecting mobile 0xxnumberxxx with a repeat call attempt and no service request, this is third attempt since xx time xx.' Police Call Handlers will create a call card as per 3.10.9 (refer to Force Grading and Deployment Policy [D051](#)).
- 3.10.6 In the event of a callback being made to a silent mobile 999 call, where it is ascertained that the 999 call was made inadvertently and no emergency exists, the name/address and current location (if different to home address) of the person with the phone is to be taken and recorded on the call card.
- 3.10.7 Silent 999 calls from landline phones will be logged and graded as per Force Grading and Deployment Policy [D051](#) and made subject of an address check in STORM. If the address check reveals nothing untoward at the address then a call back will be made. In the event of a call back revealing nothing untoward at the address then the call card can be suitably updated and closed. If the address check reveals cause for concern then the call card can be transferred for action to Supervisory for upgrade in line with Force Grading and Deployment Policy [D051](#) and routed to the Resource Deployment Officer for dispatch. Callbacks will not be made where an address check in STORM on an address shows recent violent or domestic incidents. If a callback is unsuccessful, the incident will be graded according to the circumstances known for a welfare check to be conducted at the address.
- 3.10.8 Silent 999 calls from telephone kiosks will be logged. If there are no **aggravating factors** they will be graded non-attendance and no further action taken. If there are **aggravating factors** the call card will be brought to the attention of a supervisor who will determine the graded response.

- 3.10.9 **Aggravating Factors** are defined as any unusual factor which causes concern, e.g. time or location of the call, previous history or background noises.
- 3.10.10 Noisy/abandoned 999/112 calls from mobile telephones where the nature of the noise gives cause for concern as to the well being of the caller, or other persons in the vicinity but no location is known will be graded in accordance with Force Grading and Deployment Policy [D051](#). Call handlers will request the 'Eastings and Northings' from the BT Operator so that an indication of the area that the call was made from can be established. Such calls will be 'sigged' as follows [MOBILE] [UNKNOWN]. A search will be conducted on UNIFI and STORM inputting the telephone number to establish if any information is held against the telephone number. Efforts may, if appropriate, be made to call back the number to identify the location at which time the log may then be re-graded. The log will also be switched to the Control Room Sergeant for a data warehouse check and also to consider whether the criteria are met for a subscriber check.
- 3.10.11 112 calls (European equivalent of 999) will be dealt with under the appropriate heading above.
- 3.10.12 Where the report concerns an incident of domestic abuse, violence, drug or alcohol abuse and/or any other offence of a nature where public safety is considered to be at risk and there is a firearms certificate holder sig warning, the call card must be tagged to refer the log to Firearms Licensing. The report does not need to involve the use or threatened use of any firearm by the certificate holder, it is just to make sure that the necessary safeguards are in place and to ensure Firearms Licensing are aware of incidents so that they can take them into account when renewing a certificate or prompt officers to remove the firearm if necessary (cross reference Force Policy [D044](#)).

### **3.11 Inappropriate Emergency Calls [FOIA – Open]**

- 3.11.1 Inappropriate 999 calls are those which relate to 'non emergency' situations, outside the definition in paragraph 3.10.1.
- 3.11.2 Inappropriate 999 calls may, at the discretion of the operator, be logged providing that the reported incident is sufficiently serious e.g. burglary.
- 3.11.3 When an inappropriate 999 call from any telephone (mobile or otherwise) is received prior to termination the below should be taken into account:
- (a) Serious / nature of incident being reported
  - (b) Condition / trauma of caller or victim at the time of the call.
  - (c) Potential age and vulnerability of the reporting person.
- 3.11.4 However, the general rule is on receipt of an inappropriate 999 call the call handler will politely but firmly advise the caller that the correct number to ring is 101 or if they prefer visit their local police station. No attempt is to be made to transfer the call, as this will keep the 999 line open.

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3.11.5 Should the caller persist after the advice has been given, he/she will be told it is our intention to terminate the call. Once a warning has been given the call can be terminated.

### **3.12 Email / Internet incident reporting [FOIA – Open, except at paragraph 3.12.1]**

#### **3.12.1 [FOIA – Locations Closed s.31(1)(a)]**

3.12.2 If the email received is of an operational nature or a report of a crime then the information must be put into the relevant operational system. It should be dealt with in the normal manner adhering to [D051 – Grading & Deployment Policy](#).

3.12.3 Prior to sending any reply or forwarding an email to anyone, the content of the email must be checked and any attachments should also be opened and verified that they are applicable and relevant to the email. If the email has attachments that are considered to be inappropriate, they **must** be removed prior to sending – if in doubt advice must be sought from a supervisor.

3.12.4 Once an email has been actioned and dealt with, the email and response or action to the email will be recorded in Customer Details within the CCAD.

3.12.5 Emails will be stored for a period of 3 years as per Force policy [D032 – Records Management Policy](#)

3.12.6. The Devon and Cornwall Police website provides access to members of the public for various online forms where direct email contact can be made to various teams and organisations. This also includes sending a thank you and making a complaint.

### **4.0 Assessment Compliance [FOIA – Open]**

4.1 This policy has been drafted and audited to comply with the principles of the Human Rights Act. Equality and diversity issues have also been considered to ensure compliance with Equality legislation and policies. In addition Data Protection, Freedom of Information, Management of Police Information and Health and Safety issues have been considered. Adherence to this policy will therefore ensure compliance with all relevant legislation and internal policies.

### **5.0 Review and Ownership [FOIA – Open]**

5.1 The review of the contents of this policy is the responsibility of the Commander Operations. Review of the policy will be undertaken annually.