

# Survey results:

## Performance of the 101 Non-Emergency Number in Surrey

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OFFICE OF THE POLICE &  
CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR  
**SURREY**



## Introduction

In October 2022, Police and Crime Commissioner Lisa Townsend launched a public survey asking for residents' views on how Surrey Police respond to non-emergency calls to the 101 non-emergency number.

League tables published by the Home Office show that Surrey Police is one of the best forces at quickly answering 999 calls, but staff shortages in the police Contact Centre meant that calls to 999 were prioritised, resulting in some people experiencing long waits for calls to 101 to be answered.

A key priority in the Commissioner's [Police and Crime Plan](#) is 'Strengthening Relationships between Surrey Police and Surrey residents'. This includes contact and at a recent review of the Plan, the Office of the Commissioner identified that an improvement in 101 performance was needed.

## Our survey

To assist Surrey Police to improve performance, we carried out a survey on public expectations and experiences of the 101 non-emergency number in Surrey.

We asked if residents had recently contacted Surrey Police using the 101 number, the amount of time they waited for a response and what they did if their call wasn't answered.

We also asked about the service provided by call handlers, whether individuals were clear on the differences between when to contact the 101 number and when to call 999, and if they would support further investment from the Commissioner to enhance the service provided.

**The survey was live from the 18 October to 14 November and received 441 responses.** While the service provided by Surrey Police staff who answer 101 calls was seen as being good, the majority of respondents said that the waiting time and when contacting the 101 number was bad or very bad.

The majority of respondents said they were aware of when to call 101 and would accept a wait of up to five minutes for their call to be answered. The majority of people supported increased investment in the call handling function in Surrey Police. Read more below on what Surrey Police and the Officer of the PCC are doing to improve the performance of the 101 number and to see the full survey results.



## **What Surrey Police are doing to improve performance**

Surrey Police have identified that their main issue with delivering 101 call handling performance is staffing in the Contact Centre.

Work has been ongoing for the past year to improve call handling performance including the critical staffing situation. There is a strategic group of leaders who are overseeing work to improve service delivery which focusses on the following areas:

### **Recruitment**

Since October 2021, the recruitment process has been reviewed identifying the need for this to be more up to date. The way of applying for roles has since changed from completion of an application form to the uploading of CVs making it quicker and easier to apply. This has not only seen an increase in the number of applicants but the quality of those seeking roles. The Force has developed a dedicated recruitment page on its website for opportunities within the team, which can be viewed [here](#) and, with the support of Corporate Communications, has produced a new recruitment campaign, link [here](#).

There are courses booked for new starters throughout next year (scheduled for every other month) with January and March's intakes already looking healthy. Further work is being carried out on how new staff are coached to see if there is a more effective and efficient way of doing so whilst still ensuring that the highest of standards are maintained.

### **Additional Staff Support**

Four agency staff joined the Contact Centre in October 2022 to assist with crime recording, to free up call handler time, along with officers on overtime who are supporting both the contact centre (crime inputting) and the Force Control Room (administrative tasks and call-backs to members of the public). Some officers are also being trained in the call handling system to enable them to take 999 calls should the need ever arise.

### **Reward and recognition**

All leavers from the Contact Centre are asked their reasons for leaving as part of an exit interview and the main reasons include:

- To become a police officer (as part of the police uplift programme) which has seen larger numbers leaving in recent months to meet officer recruitment deadlines
- Seeking roles within or outside Surrey Police that don't involve shift work
- Pay and allowances. A particular issue highlighted in exit interviews is that colleagues in Sussex doing the same role receive a higher shift allowance making their take home pay higher.

The first point is encouraged and the second difficult to change. But allowances have been reviewed to assist. In December the Chief Constable announced a 20% increase on the current unsocial hours' payments (effective 1<sup>st</sup> Sept 2022) and an increase of £1900 for all staff (minus the 3% already awarded), again effective from 1<sup>st</sup> Sept 2022. The Chief's communication to the Force highlighted that discussions on funding had placed particular focus on frontline areas such as the Contact Centre and an acknowledgement of critical staffing vacancies. This, along with an increase in the amount paid to coaches, is a positive step forward and will hopefully improve the retention of staff.

The Contact Centre has a refreshed staff forum which is chaired by the Head of Contact where they have the opportunity to raise any concerns, discuss ideas etc and there is a monthly newsletter for the whole Contact and Deployment team.

### **Process Review**

A review has already been undertaken of some key functions within the Contact Centre in order to try and make things more efficient which generated some useful recommendations, and a more in-depth "journey of the call" review is underway involving several members of staff. A pilot is also due to start soon of a small, dedicated team of staff focussed solely on taking crime reports from members of the public (a process that has been in place previously) to assess if this works in making the Contact Centre workload more manageable. A review of the coaching function within the Contact Centre by is due to start imminently with a report on findings expected mid Jan 2023.

### **Performance**

The Head of Contact has been reviewing how 101 performance is assessed. There is no national measure for 101 performance, with some forces not measuring performance at all. Surrey Police has had an internal target for the last few years of aiming to answer 80% of 101 calls within 3 minutes. This is for management monitoring rather than for call handling staff so as not to place undue pressure or hurry calls that may require time. Staff within the control room are only shown how many callers are waiting and wait time so that they can acknowledge or apologise for wait times to callers as required.

There is also an increasing need to look at the other ways in which people contact Surrey Police for non-emergencies. There is a great deal of data available to show the demand coming into the Force which is much wider than traditional calls and includes all digital contact (emails, Single Online Home, twitter, Facebook and Instagram). Since its introduction in June 2020 contact via digital means has grown significantly and will inform resource requirements/planning for the future.

Following the survey run by OPCC, 5 minutes appears to be the period of time that most respondents felt was acceptable to wait for a 101 call to be answered which has helped to inform a review of how we present performance data and to remove the existing 3-minute target and to look at a wider range of performance measures, such as the call wait time of 75% of calls and 95% of calls and the % of 101 calls that are answered in 5 mins. The Performance and Consultation team are working on a new look 101 performance product which will be presented to the Contact SMT for agreement.

### **What is the PCC doing to improve performance?**

Carrying out this survey was a step towards improving performance. The PCC has responsibilities to scrutinise the Chief Constable of Surrey Police and the police performance as well as consulting with and speaking to communities. By asking for feedback on the 101 number from residents, this has allowed Surrey Police work to take into account public opinion and expectations. The lead officer in the PCC's office has discussed the results of the survey with Surrey Police leads and the force has taken the results into account in their work.

The PCC has asked for a full report on the actions being taken to improve performance and will be carrying out regular scrutiny of performance.

During the budget setting process for 2023/24 the PCC will be working with Surrey Police to look at any required areas of investment, including call handling, and how this can be funded.

The PCC and her office will support recruitment campaigns and promote the role of call handler. The PCC and Deputy PCC also carry out regular visits to the contact centre to show staff their support.



### How can the public help?

The survey and other feedback has showed that there is a desire to see improved call handling performance in Surrey Police, but also a great deal of support for the 101 number and the staff who answer calls. The PCC would like to continue to encourage that support and in addition would ask:


- Consider a career as a call handler or encourage others to apply. The role is a very rewarding role with improved pay allowances. More information and the application forms can be found [here](#)
- Be patient if calling and recognise that sometimes calls may take longer than 5 minutes to answer when call handlers are busy on emergency calls.
- Consider whether you can contact Surrey Police in other ways if there is a wait to answer your 101 call, see here for a link to the online form, Livechat and social media more information [Contact us | Surrey Police](#)
- Thank call handling staff if they have provided you with a good service.



## Survey results











The results of the survey are included below:




### 1. Before today, were you aware of the police non-emergency 101 number?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		95.01%	419
2	No		4.99%	22

Nearly everyone answering the survey had heard of the non-emergency 101 number.

### 2. How did you hear about the 101 number?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Information about this survey		2.75%	12
2	From a police officer		12.16%	53
3	A leaflet		7.80%	34
4	Commissioner's website		0.92%	4
5	Surrey Police website		16.06%	70
6	Information on the police.uk website		8.49%	37
7	Surrey Police social media		13.53%	59
8	Search engine (Google, Yahoo, Bing etc.)		6.42%	28
9	Phone Book		1.83%	8
10	Radio advert		5.28%	23

11	From friends or family		16.97%	74
12	Not applicable		5.96%	26
13	Other (please specify):		28.67%	125




There were a variety of ways that people had heard of the 101 non-emergency number to contact police. Most popular means were described as 'other'.

Comments provided alongside 'other' included:

- general knowledge
- retired officer or staff
- Neighbourhood Watch
- local meetings
- Parish council

Whilst there is a wide range of ways people know about the number, Surrey Police Communications – from the website, social media and officers, play an important part of spreading the knowledge of the number.

### 3. Do you feel confident that you know the differences on when to ring the police on 999, the emergency number, and when to use the 101 non-emergency number?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		88.33%	386
2	No		5.49%	24
3	Unsure		6.41%	28
			answered	437
			skipped	4

Most people feel confident in when they should use the 101 non-emergency number.

#### 4. Please include here any comments you have on when you should contact police and on which telephone number:

Following on from question 3, people were asked about when they should contact police and on what number. Responses were open ended, but are summarised below:

- **999 in an emergency, 101 otherwise (81 respondents mentioned)**
- **999 if a crime is happening, 101 to report a crime already happened (54)**
- **999 for life threatening, 101 otherwise (37)**
- 999 if require immediate police action (8)
- To report suspicious activity (5)
- 22 people said it isn't always clear which number to use
- 11 said they wouldn't use 101 as they don't get a response
- 5 people said more information on the 101 number would be useful
- 24 other comments – such as asking for information

There was good indication that the Surrey public know of when to call 999 and when to call 101. But a few comments around more communication and better clarity being needed.

#### 5. How long do you think it is acceptable to wait for a 101 call to be answered, given that Surrey Police prioritise answering emergency 999 calls?






This was an open ended text question with no prompts. Respondents could give the time they thought acceptable. There were a range of responses as below:

- Less than a minute (any less than a minute were grouped) – (32 respondents)
- 1 minute (36)
- 2 minutes (59)
- 3 minutes (55)
- 4 minutes (3)
- 5 minutes (112)
- Between 5 and 10 minutes (grouped) (18)
- 10 minutes (52)
- 15 minutes (16)
- 20 minutes (8)
- 30 minutes (2)
- Longer than 30 minutes (grouped) (7)
- Comment re being an automated message re time to answer or call back system (6)
- Other comment (13)

There were a range of comments made. The average time was around 4 or 5 minutes.





**6. You can also contact Surrey Police using the following digital channels. Tick each of the following that you are aware of as a means of contacting Surrey Police.**

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Live chat on the Surrey Police website		44.22%	195
2	Through an online contact form on the Surrey Police website		58.73%	259
3	Facebook		35.83%	158
4	Twitter		25.62%	113
5	Not aware of these methods of contact		29.25%	129
			answered	441







There was a general high awareness of other methods of contacting police, particularly the online contact form, mentioned by 59% of respondents to this question, live chat at 44% and Facebook, 36%. However, 29% of respondents weren't aware of other methods of contact, so there is room for some promotion of ways to contact Surrey Police.

**7. Have you called 101 in the last year?**

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		60.09%	265
2	No - please go to Question 14		40.36%	178
			answered	441
			skipped	0







Just over 60% of respondents to this survey had called 101 in the last year. Likely to be a high level due to the topic of the survey and provides a good level of experience for answering further questions about the 101 number.

### 8. How was your overall experience when you called 101?



Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very good		11.08%	35
2	Good		11.39%	36
3	Neither good nor bad		14.24%	45
4	Bad		25.32%	80
5	Very bad		29.43%	93
6	I haven't called 101 in the last year		8.86%	28
			answered	316

For those who answered this question, overall 22% felt they had received a good service, 11% said neither good nor bad, 55% felt that had received a bad service. This would be higher if those who hadn't called were taken out of the analysis, at 25% good, 16% neutral, 60% bad. The most popular response was 'very bad'.

### 9. How long approx. did you have to wait for your call to be answered. If you have made several calls, please refer to the last call you made







Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Within one minute		2.91%	9
2	Within a couple of minutes		14.24%	44
3	About 5 minutes		10.68%	33
4	About 10 minutes		11.97%	37
5	About 20 minutes		11.65%	36
6	Longer (please specify)		20.39%	63

**9. How long approx. did you have to wait for your call to be answered. If you have made several calls, please refer to the last call you made**

7	I don't know as I hung up		26.21%	81
8	I haven't called 101 in the last year		8.74%	27
			answered	309
			skipped	132











When asked about how long it had taken for their call to be answered, 26% said they don't know as the hung up. A further 20% said it took longer than 20 minutes. With a range of answers for other times. In total, 28% of people had their call answered within 5 minutes.

**10. What is your view of this answering time**

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very good		8.01%	25
2	Good		9.29%	29
3	Neither good nor bad		12.18%	38
4	Bad		21.15%	66
5	Very bad		42.31%	132
6	I haven't called 101 in the last year		7.69%	24
			answered	312
			skipped	129

Overall, most people felt the time to answer their call was bad, 21% or very bad, 42%. Again, taking out the haven't called responder this increases the percentage to 23% and 46% - giving a total of 69% thinking their call answering time was bad.







### 11. If your call wasn't answered, or you left the call, what did you do next?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Called 999		7.21%	16
2	Called back on 101 another time		19.37%	43
3	Contacted another agency e.g. Surrey County Council		2.70%	6
4	Used the Surrey Police online contact form		19.37%	43
5	Used the Surrey Police Livechat function		12.16%	27
6	Used Facebook to contact Surrey Police		5.41%	12
7	Used Twitter to contact Surrey Police		1.80%	4
8	Didn't pursue the issue		34.68%	77
9	I haven't called 101 in the last year		6.31%	14
10	Not applicable		3.60%	8
			answered	222
			skipped	219

Respondents were asked what they did if their call wasn't answered. More respondents answered this question than said in question 9 that their call wasn't answered, but some may have been referring to other occasions of calling 101.

The most popular response was that they didn't pursue the issue, 35%. However, most people did go onto make contact some other way, including calling 101 another time (19%), using the contact form (19%), using Livechat (12%), and calling 999 (7%).

## 12. What is your view of the service you received from the call handler?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very good		22.22%	58
2	Good		22.61%	59
3	Neither good nor bad		26.05%	68
4	Bad		8.81%	23
5	Very bad		15.71%	41
6	I haven't called 101 in the last year		5.36%	14
			answered	261
			skipped	180

More positive was the view of the service received from the call handler when calling 101. Taking out those who hadn't called 101, 47% felt the service was good, 28% responded neither good or bad and 26% felt the service received was bad.

## 13. Please let us know any other comments about the service you received

A total of 180 comments were received about the service received. Attached at Appendix A are all comments received, some making several points. But to aid interpretation of the comments, these have been grouped into common themes as follows:

- Took a long time to answer call (31 respondents)
- Call wasn't answered (30)
- Poor service received (22)
- Good service was received (21)
- Good and helpful staff (21)
- No police response or follow up (15)
- Call handler not good (10)
- Waiting times have improved (5)
- Online contact is good (5)
- Used the online form instead (4)
- Online contact isn't suitable for all (4)
- Was advised to call 999 (3)
- Don't like the answer message when calling 101 (3)






- No reply to the contact form (2)
- Online form is difficult to use (2)
- Beat messenger is good (2)
- Got put through to the wrong force (2)
- Other comment (16)

#### 14. Please add here any other comments about the 101 number generally

A last free text question asked if there were any other general comments about the 101 number. A total of 223 comments were received. Again, these are all shown at Appendix A and summarised below:




- 101 takes too long to be answered (47 respondents)
- Poor service was received from 101 (26)
- 101 needs better staffing (16)
- Good service was received from 101 (16)
- 101 is a needed service (16)
- The police response was poor (14)
- It could be clearer which number to call (13)
- Online methods are better ways of contact (12)
- Call handlers are good (7)
- Need to make people aware of other contact methods (6)
- Don't like the recorded message when call 101 (5)
- Online contact isn't suitable for everyone (4)
- Lack of police presence (4)
- 101 isn't free to call (3)
- Online contact form is difficult to use (3)
- Get asked too many questions when call 101 (2)
- Get put through to the wrong force (2)
- There should be info on place in the queue/ length of wait (2)
- Other comments (41)

#### 15. Do you think Surrey PCC should invest more of the police budget in answering 999 and 101 calls?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		63.72%	281
2	No		9.07%	40
3	Not sure		27.89%	123




Most respondents felt that more should be invested in answering 999 and 101 calls, 64%.

**16. Would you be willing to pay more in your council tax to help fund investment in answering calls to police?**

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		38.55%	170
2	No		36.28%	160
3	Not sure		25.85%	114
			answered	441
			skipped	0













There was split in views as to whether respondents would pay more council tax to help investment in answering calls. The most popular response was yes, 39%, closely followed by no, 36% and with 26% not being sure. This indicates some public appetite for funding further investment, which could be fed into precept discussions.

**17. Do you think public have enough information about 999 and 101 call performance?**










Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		20.41%	90
2	No		55.33%	244
3	Not sure		24.94%	110
			answered	441
			skipped	0

Over half of respondents felt that the public did not have enough information about 999 and 101 call performance. This could be looked at to see what more can be provided.




Demographic questions were asked with regard to borough, age, gender and where respondents heard about the survey, shown below:

18. In which borough or district of Surrey do you live?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Elmbridge		9.75%	43
2	Epsom and Ewell		5.90%	26
3	Guildford		9.98%	44
4	Mole Valley		7.48%	33
5	Reigate and Banstead		10.20%	45
6	Runnymede		7.48%	33
7	Spelthorne		8.84%	39
8	Surrey Heath		12.02%	53
9	Tandridge		10.43%	46
10	Waverley		11.11%	49
11	Woking		6.58%	29
12	I don't live in Surrey		0.91%	4
			answered	441
			skipped	0













### 19. What is your age category?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	17 or below		0.00%	0
2	18-24		1.59%	7
3	25-29		1.59%	7
4	30-39		3.87%	17
5	40-49		10.93%	48
6	50-59		19.13%	84
7	60-69		25.74%	113
8	70-79		25.28%	111
9	80+		7.74%	34
10	Prefer not to say		4.10%	18
			answered	439
			skipped	2

### 20. What is your sex?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Female		43.58%	190
2	Male		50.69%	221
3	Prefer not to say		5.73%	25
			answered	436

## 21. Where did you hear about this survey?

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Commissioner's social media including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram		12.95%	57
2	Surrey Police social media including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram		5.68%	25
3	NextDoor		8.18%	36
4	LinkedIn		0.00%	0
5	Commissioner's website		3.86%	17
6	Surrey Police website		2.05%	9
7	Internet search		0.68%	3
8	In the Know newsletter		30.68%	135
9	Neighbourhood Watch		18.86%	83
10	Other Community Newsletter		2.27%	10
11	Local news or radio		0.00%	0
12	Residents' group		3.18%	14
13	Word of mouth		0.91%	4
14	Other		15.23%	67
			answered	440
			skipped	1



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