

Contact management

Principles and guidance for police authorities

Association of Police Authorities

1 Introduction

This short guidance is aimed at ensuring that police authorities monitor and scrutinise implementation of the National Contact Management Strategy (NCMS) at a force-wide level and are able to ask the right questions to ensure adequate oversight and scrutiny. The strategy is underpinned by the National Contact Management Principles and Guidance (NCMPG) which aim to provide the tactical and operational 'tools' for forces to achieve implementation.

Police authorities have a vital role to play in the new performance landscape, particularly in relation to raising public confidence. This guidance should therefore be read in conjunction with the *Association of Police Authorities' Monitoring and oversight of the policing pledge – an overarching police authority strategy* (2009, APA), *Citizen Focus Policing Hallmarks* (2008, NPIA), *The Policing Pledge* (2008, Home Office) and the *National Contact Management Principles and Guidance* (2009, NPIA)(NCMPG).

Although most contact from the public is, in terms of volume, via the telephone, police authorities should not lose sight of the fact that there are a whole range of contact channels including face-to-face, email, SMS, letters, Language Line and so on.

Research shows that negative experiences of the police in citizen-initiated encounters are particularly associated with damage to public confidence in the police – more so than police-initiated encounters. This highlights the importance of ensuring a high quality of service in contacts with the public, such as when dealing with calls for service. In addition, experiences are often transmitted to others. A positive or negative experience with the police may not only affect the person with whom the police come into direct contact, but also others with whom that person associates.

The key message in the NCMS is **'making every contact count: delivering services that meet individual need, reassure our communities and increase public confidence in policing.'**

2 Role of the police authority

Police authorities play a vital role in ensuring the delivery of improved policing outcomes for issues that matter to and benefit local people – its core function is to secure an efficient and effective police force.

The growing expectations from the Government and the public for improved policing services and the need to demonstrate value for money means that the demands placed on police authorities have never been greater. Accountability for policing is a current political issue and financial settlements are expected to be tougher than in the past. Police authorities are also now being subjected to rigorous joint inspection from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) and the Audit Commission (AC), and the recent document *New Performance Landscape for Crime and Policing* (Home Office, 2009) following the 2008 Policing Green Paper makes it clear that police authorities have an enhanced role to play in performance monitoring arrangements for their forces.

In respect of the NCMS, police authorities need to ensure that their force considers the whole 'customer journey' from end-to-end, with a joined-up vision that ensures that their model of scrutiny contains a suitable level of focus on contact management, recognising the value of contact management in terms of overall service delivery. Police authorities will be expected to tackle poor local performance and initiate remedial action in respect of contact management and related concerns.

In addition, police authorities should always be mindful of the role that contact management plays in providing evidence around the four themes contained in the police authority inspection framework:

Setting strategic direction and priorities
Ensuring that the police authority and force have the leadership, capacity and capability needed to deliver good quality service outcomes on behalf of the public.

Scrutinising performance outcomes
Ensuring that the police authority is effective in scrutinising how the force delivers the priority services that matter to local people.

Achieving results through community engagement and partnership
Ensuring that the police authority achieves results to deliver its ambition and strategic priorities.

Ensuring value for money and productivity
Ensuring a clear and sustained focus on value for money, in order to secure a good deal for the public.

The principles set out in the remainder of this guidance also indicate how they relate to the four themes, if appropriate.

It is also important, in respect of the NCMS, that **'...police authorities ensure targets are set for the 'customer journey' (where relevant) that do not cause any perverse behaviour...'** in one or more parts of the contact management process. For example, the focus on non-emergency call handling response should not be to detriment of the allocation of neighbourhood response availability.

3 Principles for police authorities

The NCMS provides, through a relational framework of principles, critical success factors and other guidance, a framework for individual forces to achieve the vision, aims and benefits set out in the strategy. Police authorities have a central role in asking the right questions of their force and gaining the relevant assurances.

In particular, police authorities will need to **'...ensure that their force undertakes a 'gap' analysis...'** between its existing contact management procedures and the requirements of the NCMS.

The following section covers:

- **the eight strategic principles in the NCMS;**
- **questions that police authorities should be asking;** and
- **evidence that police authorities should be looking for and should be asking their force to answer routinely as part of their scrutiny process.**

This is not a comprehensive list and reference should be made to the NCMPG document for detailed information.

The questions under the following principles are focused to some extent on achieving outcomes and, where possible, they are linked to the police authority inspection framework. The more detailed focus on the 'how to' is contained in the matrix of principles contained within the NCMPG document.

Principle one Customer

How does the force design and deliver contact management on the basis of **citizen and business needs** to increase customer satisfaction and public confidence?

Related theme Achieving results through community engagement and partnership

What is the strength of evidence in relation to the following:

- Do the force and police authority understand the needs and expectations of citizens? Do they value citizens and keep them involved?
- Does the force give people choices about how to access services when they contact the police? Are solutions delivered in conjunction with partners?
- How is the force ensuring that it does the right things for people at the right time?

Principle two Leadership

How does the force deliver **effective leadership** at all levels to promote and enhance citizen focused contact management?

Related theme Setting strategic direction and priorities

What is the strength of evidence in relation to the following:

- Is there a noticeable commitment to the Citizen Focus Hallmarks within the force?
- Does the force provide an 'end-to-end' culture of service delivery?
- Is contact management strategically focused through chief officers?

Principle three People

How does the force **invest in people** and involve them in shaping contact management?

Related theme Setting strategic direction and priorities

What is the strength of evidence in relation to the following:

- Is the force making efforts to recruit, develop and retain the right people throughout the whole 'customer journey'?
- Does the force recognise and reward excellence in contact management?
- Has the force equipped people with the necessary tools/skills?
- How are the force empowering people to deliver excellent customer service?

Principle four Finance

How are the force and police authority ensuring the optimum balance is achieved between the cost of service and delivering an excellent customer service to **provide value for money**?

Related theme Ensuring value for money and productivity

What is the strength of evidence in relation to the following:

- How is the force providing value for money, achieving cashable savings and improving productivity around contact management? How are any benefits being sustained?
- How does the force make regular use of appropriate cost comparisons and benchmarking?
- What work is the force undertaking with partners to enhance resilience in respect of contact management?

Principle five Knowledge

How is the force exploiting the **value of citizen and business knowledge** to understand and improve local accountability?

Related theme Achieving results through community engagement and partnership

What is the strength of evidence in relation to the following:

- Has the force put in place technology that supports operational delivery and provides appropriate management information?
- Do the force and police authority use both qualitative and quantitative measures to scrutinise and evaluate contact management performance and customer outcomes across the end-to-end process? Including the standard measures in the Policing Pledge. *Monitoring and oversight of the policing pledge – an overarching police authority strategy* provides information of relevance to police authorities.
- Have the force and police authority put in place common definitions to measure and understand performance and delivery at a local level?
- How is the force using benchmarking to identify areas of excellence, focus improvement on areas of most need and share good practice?

Principles six and seven Processes

Does the force **understand the demand profile** and workflow across the organisation required to optimise the delivery of contact management services?

Related theme Ensuring value for money and productivity

How does the force ensure that it satisfies demand for contact through the most efficient and effective use of resources to deliver responsive policing?

Related theme Ensuring value for money and productivity

What is the strength of evidence in relation to the following:

Insight and demand

- How is the force engaging and consulting with all groups? Is the police authority involved in this consultation work?
- How does the police authority robustly challenge the force around the supply and demand profiles for contact management?
- How does the force promote first contact resolution?
- How does the force engage with partnerships as appropriate in respect of contact management?

Operational excellence

- Has the force implemented a contact management strategy and shared this with the police authority?

- How is the police authority and force working together to ensure that partnership working/collaboration are working well?
- Has the force put in place plans for business continuity/disaster recovery?
- How is technology being used as a driver for improvement?

Measuring success

It will be important for police authorities to scrutinise performance outcomes through consideration of the following:

- improving public safety;
- reducing crime and anti-social behaviour along with partners;
- enhancing criminal justice outcomes;
- delivering the Policing Pledge Commitments (*Monitoring and oversight of the policing pledge – an overarching police authority strategy* provides information of relevance to police authorities);
- achieving efficiency and productivity targets set by the police authority;
- putting in place transparent measures around contact management (but ensuring that any targets set by police authorities for the ‘customer journey’ do not cause any perverse behaviour); and
- making effective use of benchmarking and good practice.

Principle eight Partners

Does the force optimise resilience through effective planning and collaboration with partners to enhance contact management capability?

Related theme Ensuring value for money and productivity

Related theme Setting strategic direction and priorities

What is the strength of evidence in relation to the following:

- Does the force have in place business continuity/disaster recovery plans for contact management in order to ensure a 24/7 service is provided? Are these plans regularly tested?
- Have the force and police authority explored opportunities to collaborate with partners on shared contact management functions and services?

The last question is of particular significance to police authorities given the increasing national and regional focus on collaboration.

THE APA would like to
thank **Paul Wainwright**
of Humberside Police
Authority for his work in
compiling this guidance

Association of Police Authorities
15 Greycoat Place
London SW1P 1BN

Tel 020 7664 3168
Fax 020 7664 3191

www.apa.police.uk