

Thematic Report on COPFS Enquiry Point

May 2013

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND

1. The idea of a Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) Enquiry Point was first piloted in Stirling. This pilot was found to be successful and as a result an Enquiry Point Project Board was set up in 2008 with a view to set up a service wide contact centre.
2. A contact centre is a place where people can interact with an organisation, be it through telephony, email, fax, social media, etc. Such services should be provided in a way that are designed to meet both users and the organisations needs and easy to access. They should be efficient, effective and provide value for money. Services should be monitored and measured against targets and objectives and produce positive outcomes.
3. Contact centres can deliver key benefits:
 - Enhances access – there is a clear point of contact
 - Improves quality service – it is focussed and consistent
 - Increases efficiency – better use of resources
 - Greater effectiveness – routine calls dealt with quickly
 - Cost savings – reduces the number of interactions and trying to resolve call at first point of contact
 - Improves customer perception
4. According to Central Office of Information (COI) guidelines 'Better Practice Guidance for Government Contact Centres' excellent customer service can be achieved through:
 - 'ensuring that the contact centre is accessible, with appropriate opening hours; sensible level of resource to meet demand and avoid queues; well structured response vehicles, processes and systems with considered use of technology; and, empowered, well trained empathetic agents who are able to engage in a good conversation and ideally meet citizens' needs in a first time call resolution or simply point them in the right direction for further information if that is more appropriate'
5. COPFS recognises that there is a need to put systems in place that will help provide the information needs of customers. The COPFS Strategic Plan 2009-2012 states that it is committed to:
 - 'providing services that meet the information needs of victims, witnesses and nearest relatives....'
6. This was reiterated in the recently published Strategic Plan 2012-2015.

7. The COPFS Enquiry Point¹ is a way of delivering such a commitment. It fully established in Dumbarton by October 2009. It allows for the provision of general information to the public and partnership agencies from a single point of contact and will either deal with the information needs of the person calling at the time or will route it to an office as appropriate.

¹ The English dictionary defines a contact centre as 'an office where people communicate with the customers of a company by phone, email, etc, for example, answering questions and dealing with complaints'

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

Aim

8. The aim of this inspection was to review the operation of the COPFS Enquiry Point and to consider the extent to which its aims and objectives are being met.

Scope

9. The scope of the inspection included an examination of existing policies, strategies and commitments and identification of standard good practice guides.

10. Further to this we consulted with COPFS management and strategic leads, interviewed staff, carried out a field visit and issued feedback questionnaires to criminal justice partner organisations and agencies who use the service and to COPFS staff who receive transferred calls.

Objectives

11. The objectives of the review are:

- To ensure that policy and practice in relation to the administration and management of the COPFS Enquiry Point are established and maintained and that policy reflects the vision of the COPFS
- To determine whether the COPFS Enquiry Point service is being delivered in an efficient and economical manner and is customer focussed
- To determine whether the COPFS Enquiry Point is accessible to all and helpful to users
- To consider whether there is scope for increased information provision by the COPFS Enquiry Point
- To evaluate whether the aims and objectives of the COPFS Enquiry Point are being met

Acknowledgement:

12. We are very grateful to all the people who gave so generously of their time and contributed to our feedback survey during this inspection.

CHAPTER 3

LEADERSHIP AND BUSINESS PLANNING

13. The COPFS Enquiry Point Project Board was set up in 2008 and consisted of senior managers and representatives from Information Systems Division. A business case was issued in August 2008 and it included options, benefits expected, associated risks, costs, timescales, investment appraisal and user requirements. After consideration of options it was decided to proceed with a National Enquiry Point. A review of the business case was carried out in September 2009.

14. At the start of this review the Enquiry Point was under the command of the Argyll and Clyde Area and overall responsibility lay with the Area Business Manager and the Project Board. It has recently been moved to the newly created COPFS Customer Care Unit within the 'National Federation'² which is headed by the Deputy Chief Executive. This change officially came into force in March 2013.

15. According to the Enquiry Point Business Case the purpose of establishing the Enquiry Point was:

- 'To improve delivery of service to the public (including victims, witnesses, accused persons and their representatives) by providing a high quality and prompt telephone enquiry service building on best practice in the contact centre industry and supported by appropriate training'

16. The Enquiry Point was initially set up as part of Argyll and Clyde and was included as part of the Argyll and Clyde business plan with its aims and objectives monitored by the Area Business Manager and Area Fiscal.

17. The Enquiry Point has also been added to the Strategy and Delivery Division³ business plan as it is envisaged that the Enquiry Point will continue to evolve and help with COPFS projects in collating feedback about projects, for example, asking solicitors who call whether they have signed up to the secure disclosure website or asking callers whether they have used the COPFS website.

18. In addition senior management of the COPFS including the Crown Agent and Deputy Chief Executive receive quarterly reports to update them on performance and progress along with involvement in new projects/initiatives.

² In 2012 the COPFS structure changed from 11 Areas and Crown Office to 3 operational Federations (North, East, West) and a National Federation

³ A unit within the Corporate Services Division that has as one of its aims 'to deliver a programme of constant improvement'

19. The current targets for the Enquiry Point are as follows:
- To deal with 85% of calls at first contact⁴
 - Abandon⁵ call rate <10%
20. Achievement of targets is discussed at Chapter 9 - 'Performance Monitoring'.
21. With the introduction of the Customer Care Unit it is considered that the COPFS is committed to providing a good customer service. The continuing growth and involvement of the Enquiry Point as the first point of contact should go a long way to helping ensure that the organisation shows itself to be customer facing and dedicated to improving services.
22. Commitment to providing a service that meets information needs is shown in the COPFS Strategic Plan 2012-2015 which states that greater use will be made of the Enquiry Point as a means of 'communicating with members of the public and defence agents, providing swifter response times and a full electronic trail and nature of communications'.

⁴ Increased in January 2012 from 80%

⁵ Unanswered calls

CHAPTER 4

PROCESS

Standards

23. There are many published standards relating to the set up of and managing a contact centre including:

- National Occupational Standards for Government Contact Centres
- Scottish Government Good Practice Guidelines for the Establishment of Contact Centres
- Central Office of Information 'Better Practice Guidance for Government Contact Centres (Third Edition)'
- British Standard Customer Service Code of Practice

24. These publications provide advice and guidance on various factors that should help deliver a good service, for example, day to day management, forecasting, methods of calculating performance, etc.

25. IPS was advised that standards were looked at in the early stages of setting up the Enquiry Point. It was acknowledged by managers that it may now be a good time to have another look at standards as the Enquiry Point moves to the new Customer Care Unit.

RECOMMENDATION 1

It is recommended that good practice standards for Government Contact Centres are looked at with a view to incorporating those that would be useful/beneficial to the COPFS Enquiry Point especially now that the Enquiry Point will become part of the newly established Customer Care Unit.

The System

26. The Enquiry Point use BT-inet software and Cisco telephone and transfer system and VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol). Each member of staff has access to three screens⁶, one to utilise COPFS IT systems (FOS, SOSR, PROMIS and the intranet) which should provide a full electronic record of cases, another to record enquiries onto the Enquiry Point database and another to view contact lists.

27. The Enquiry Point number is a fixed rate non-geographic number (0844 number) so calls from any location are charged to the caller at a set cost per minute. Similarly mobile calls should be made to a 01 number. The Enquiry Point does not make use of Intelligent Number Recognition (calls directed by pressing the keypad) or Intelligent Voice Recognition (calls directed according to your response).

⁶ At the time of the review some had still to be upgraded from two screens to three

28. The Enquiry Point telephone number can be found on the first page of the COPFS website under general enquiries. It advises of 2 numbers to choose from, one from a landline (0844 number) and another from a mobile (01 number) as it is acknowledged that dialling a 0844 number from a mobile phone can be costly depending on the provider. The numbers are also generally available on literature/booklets and on standard letters. We noted, however, that some standard letters did not detail the telephone number to be called from a mobile (reference is made later in the report to comments concerning the high costs of calling from a mobile). Numbers on letters can be changed by COPFS staff to their own direct dial number if so wished.

RECOMMENDATION 2

It is recommended that all standard letters include the Enquiry Point telephone number to call from mobile phones.

29. The system provides an introductory greeting which advises of opening hours, numbers to call for fine enquiries, advice relating to witness citations, an assurance that all calls will be dealt with respectfully and a notification that all calls are recorded for audit, quality and training purposes. We refer to this later in Chapters 10 and 11 – ‘Partners’ and ‘Customer Satisfaction’.

30. Inbound calls are automatically routed to waiting operators by an automatic call distribution system. Depending on input of the type of call on the database scripts pop up onto the computer screen as aid in dealing with calls. Operators can search PROMIS, etc for information such as court date, bail conditions, witness attendance dates, dates of offence, etc.

31. Staff at the Enquiry Point advise that they are confident in using the telephony system, however, they indicated that delays in performance can occur as a result of staff shortages and COPFS systems crashing or performing slowly had been apparent at the time of inspection. They also made mention of case progress not being updated on the COPFS systems due to backlogs in offices and confusion as a result of different procedures/practices within offices. Such issues impact on the ability to obtain and provide accurate information in a timely and efficient manner. Staffing issues are covered in Chapter 5 and recent issues with the COPFS IT systems are being looked into. Performance results are shown at Chapter 9.

32. There are no time limits to calls and all calls since the launch of the Enquiry Point have been recorded and can be transcribed if necessary. Recorded calls are used in training.

33. Standard forms are used by the Enquiry Point to help with service delivery. Offices are required to complete these forms and pass to the Enquiry Point so to give them up to date information, for example, contact lists and office closure, however, these forms may not always be up to date (see below).

Data

34. Advice on types of data that should be collected to aid monitoring of contact centres can be found in the Central Office of Information publication 'Better Practice Guidance for Government Contact Centres' (see Appendix 1).

35. The Enquiry Point has created its own database to record type of caller, reason for call and whether it has been transferred or dealt with.

36. IPS reviewed all calls during a 6 month period (1 May 2012 to 30 November 2012) to identify how they were broken down. This review showed a wide categorisation of calls some of which are then filtered again for further monitoring. Results of this review are found at Chapter 9 and Appendices 2 and 3.

37. We were advised that the Enquiry Point is still evolving and that further categories of caller or reason for call can be added to the database as need is identified.

Data Protection

38. The Data Protection Act 1998 came into force on 1 March 2000. The 8 principles of the Act are to ensure that data should be:

- Fairly and lawfully processed
- Processed for limited purposes
- Adequate, relevant and not excessive
- Accurate and up to date
- Not kept longer than is necessary
- Processed in line with the individual's rights
- Secure
- Not transferred to other countries without adequate protection

39. In terms of protecting data that COPFS already holds, staff have scripts which advise them on what can and cannot be intimated although we were advised that some scripts are out of date as described below. Staff are also trained to advise callers to contact their own solicitors if they are looking for legal advice, for example, a person asks if they need to disclose previous convictions.

40. Where calls are recorded for audit or coaching it is obligatory to tell callers. This can be done on the call, in leaflets or on advertising. The Enquiry Point advises callers in the opening introduction that all calls are recorded for audit and training purposes.

41. The COI provide a checklist to help ensure compliance with the main requirements of the Act and can be found in Appendix 4.

Freedom of Information Requests

42. Under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 Scottish public authorities should allow access to all types of recorded information subject to certain conditions and exemptions. The Act also requires every public authority to have a publication scheme, approved by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) and to publish information covered by this scheme. Information about the COPFS publication scheme can be found on its website and information is proactively published in this regard.

43. Freedom of information requests are recorded on the COPFS Respond system⁷. Given that the Enquiry Point is the first point of contact calls relating to Freedom of Information requests are likely to be received by them. In this instance the caller is advised to put the request in writing and they are given the address or email details of the office concerned where the request will be considered.

44. It seems sensible to ask for Freedom of Information requests to be put in writing as there needs to be a formal system to record such. We understand that under the new Customer Care Unit there will be a division dealing with Freedom of Information.

Transferring Calls:

45. Enquiry Point operators indicated that on occasion it can be difficult to transfer callers to COPFS offices as sometimes no-one answers. They have access to office contact lists and once they have identified who to call they dial the extension, if no-one answers they try the 'hunt group' extension which rings through numbers to nominated persons. We were informed that contact lists are not always up to date and this causes delays in identifying who to transfer calls to. There have been many changes in COPFS structure especially since the introduction of the new Federations and specialised units therefore names on contact lists do change a lot.

46. If the Enquiry Point is unable to transfer a call to a member of staff they can either put the caller through to leave a message or they may take details and send an email requesting a member of COPFS staff to return the call.

47. Feedback received from COPFS staff indicated that on occasion calls are transferred 'without any introduction' from Enquiry Point staff which can irritate callers as they have to repeat the reason for call. Other feedback indicated that information passed on can be 'vague' and sometimes 'incorrect' while others indicated that 'accurate' information is provided. In the main feedback showed that a 'good job' is done with quite a number of respondents indicating that operators are 'polite', 'pleasant' and 'friendly' and the service provided is 'professional' and has had a 'significant impact on the functioning of offices'.

⁷ The IT system COPFS used to record and monitor Customer Feedback, as well as requests for information under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, the Data Protection Act 1998 and Ministerial Correspondence

48. A frequent issue identified in feedback from COPFS staff was that calls can be transferred to the wrong team/person however as indicated above there is acknowledgement that staff move around a lot and there have been structural changes as a result of the new federations causing difficulty in keeping contact lists up to date.

49. Results of our customer feedback survey can be found in Chapters 10 and 11 'Partners' and 'Customer Satisfaction'.

50. We were advised that there is a system called 'Presence' which would allow Enquiry Point operators to identify staff within COPFS who are logged on to their computer and therefore possibly sitting at their desk. This is something that is currently being looked at and would perhaps help with this issue.

RECOMMENDATION 3

It is recommended that a reminder is issued to Procurator Fiscal offices to ensure that their contact lists are kept up to date.

Abusive Calls

51. Enquiry Point staff indicated that some calls can be wearing particularly those where the caller is abusive, for example, being shouted at or being told they are incompetent.

52. Staff advised that they are trained to remain calm, friendly and professional and in such instances warnings will be given to the caller that the call will be terminated. Staff support each other when this happens.

Scripts

53. When Enquiry Point operators enter 'reason for call' into their database a script automatically pops up. This highlights practice relating to what information can be given and type of information that should not be intimated.

54. Staff we spoke to advised that some scripts are out of date and require to be updated.

RECOMMENDATION 4

It is recommended that scripts used in the Enquiry Point are reviewed and updated where there has been a change in practice.

Involvement in new concepts/process reviews

55. The Enquiry Point is used as a tool by COPFS management to test new concepts or as an aid in process reviews. For example they were involved in an Argyll and Clyde project called 'Excusals Online' where calls relating to witness excusals were passed on to a legal member of staff located at the Enquiry Point. This project ran for just over a year and statistics showed that 2046 requests were dealt with in year 2011. This project was deemed a success but it was found to be difficult to resource as a member of staff had to be taken from the Dumbarton office and so was abandoned. Calls are now transferred to the relevant office as appropriate.

56. In another example, as part of the customer satisfaction survey conducted during 2012, Enquiry Point operators asked questions and collated results relating to use of the COPFS website. Questions asked included whether callers had used the website, if they found what they were looking for and what would they like to see. Results were collated by Enquiry Point management and sent to the Project Board dealing with that particular project.

57. Other projects where the Enquiry Point has been involved include:

- Edinburgh Text Pilot
- Access to Witness Statements
- Witness Information Initiative
- Pleas Hotline
- Criminal Justice Secure Mail

58. As a result of testing the Enquiry Point is now the first point of contact for all Secure Disclosure Website and Criminal Justice Secure Mail enquiries.

59. Like all organisations testing of projects is important to determine whether there will be a positive outcome but it is inevitable that some will be a success and some will not for one reason or another as shown in the above 'Excusals Online' where it was found difficult to resource in the current economic climate.

60. We have found the Enquiry Point to be proactive and willing to get involved in new projects. There is an awareness in the unit that such involvement will help improve services. It is acknowledged that the Enquiry Point does look for ways to increase service provision, an example being services of a dedicated Victim Information and Advice (VIA) member of staff to deal with provision of information to victims, witnesses and bereaved nearest relatives that the Enquiry Point staff are unable to deal with (see Chapter 5 – 'Staffing').

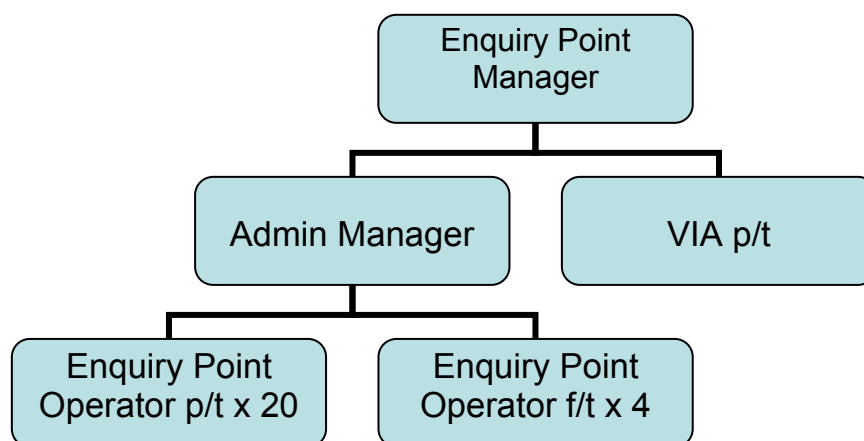
CHAPTER 5

PEOPLE

Structure

61. Officially from March 2013 the Enquiry Point became part of the COPFS Customer Care Unit in the Corporate Service Group which is headed by the Deputy Chief Executive.

62. Day to day structure of the Enquiry Point is as follows:



63. The Enquiry Point Manager is responsible for maintaining services, monitoring performance and involvement in projects where it is felt that input from the Enquiry Point could be beneficial. This post is supported by an administrative manager who oversees the day to day running of the service, for example monitoring system performance (calls waiting, etc), arranging rotas, advising and supporting staff, training, etc.

64. Enquiry Point operators are responsible for answering calls and dealing with them until resolution or up to the point of transfer and updating the Enquiry Point database.

65. At the start of this review (November 2012) we were advised that there were 10 part-time vacancies for Enquiry Point operators and that this was having an effect on performance. This can be seen in the 'Waiting Time' analysis at Chapter 9 – 'Monitoring Performance' which showed a vast increase in time for calls to be answered. By the end of 2012, 8 of these posts had been filled including 4 modern apprenticeships⁸ with a further 5 part-time posts advertised in February 2013. Management expect performance to improve and pressure to decrease on experienced staff.

⁸ Modern apprentices are employed for 2 years and will work towards an SVQ in Business and Administration

66. There is a dedicated VIA Officer who takes transferred calls from victims, witnesses and bereaved nearest relatives. This post was an addition to the Enquiry Point as a need was identified initially for dealing with calls in relation to cases that were marked no proceedings. The post can also take calls for VIA cases nationally and is able to provide more information than Enquiry Point operators by⁹:

- providing general information and advice about how the criminal justice system works and what can be expected in relation to the particular case type;
- providing updates on the progress of the case (including court dates, bail information and sentencing decisions);
- arranging for witnesses to be shown round the court before a trial;
- discussing any additional requirements (for example, access to court or needing an interpreter);
- obtaining the views of eligible witnesses about special measures that might help when giving evidence;
- offering details of organisations that can offer practical and/or emotional support, facilitating contact where appropriate.

Recruitment

67. Enquiry Point operators have generally been recruited externally due to poor take-up from COPFS staff possibly because most posts are filled on a part-time fixed term basis. Managers advised that part-time¹⁰ is the preferred option as they feel it is easier to manage and maintain continuous services.

68. Recent adverts for staff have been on fixed term basis with a possibility of permanency which means that the maximum period of employment under this contract is four years¹¹. As highlighted below it is felt that fixed term posts have implications on turnover of staff. IPS consider that with posts being advertised on a fixed term basis there is a bias towards external recruitment as COPFS staff are only likely to transfer to such posts on a permanent basis.

69. A further implication is the learning curve in the time it takes staff who are unfamiliar with COPFS practice to become proficient. If posts were filled by staff who already have knowledge of COPFS policies and systems there would be a shorter timeframe to become fully productive as an Enquiry Point operator.

⁹ Source – VIA Remit

¹⁰ Staff have the right to one uninterrupted rest break at work of 20 minutes if they work more than 6 hours per day (Working Time Regulations 1998) although COPFS have agreed with trade unions for 30 minutes rest

¹¹ COPFS Policy

Forecasting

70. Reviewing performance can help forecast future activity which can be translated into staffing and methods of meeting demands eg shift patterns. Consideration should be given to volume of contacts broken down by time of day, day of week and time of year; waiting time; length of time on call; responses to stimulus eg press coverage etc.

71. The system used by the Enquiry Point provides managers with this type of information which is used to address patterns in activity and thus allows them to forecast future activity although in real terms there have been no major trends or patterns identified.

72. In response to a change in patterns rotas may be changed, staff may be asked to work additional hours or changes may be made to staffing compliment. For example, it was initially expected at planning and set up stage that there would be a need for 32 full-time equivalent operators but as a result of reviewing activity before full implementation this was quickly reduced to 21 and then again to 14, the current staffing compliment for Enquiry Point operators (see also below at overtime/additional hours).

Attrition

73. There has been a history of high turnover of staff in contact centres and it is known to be a concern for managers in charge of such a service. However, in the current economic climate one would expect this to reduce as more people hang on to jobs.

74. We were advised that over the last year and a half vacancies were filled on a fixed term basis. Information provided to us showed that staff turnover in 2012 had been 1.4 on average per month (or 7% attrition rate) with an unusually high turnover in quarter three. Management considered that recruitment through fixed term appointments was a factor in this as staff leave to take up permanent posts but the current Civil Service recruitment rules in Scotland do not allow permanent recruitment other than specialist posts.

75. Staff at the Enquiry Point indicated that they felt increased pressure due to staff shortages and they acknowledged management difficulties associated with this. Recent recruitment included four modern apprenticeship posts where employment will last for at least 2 years which should help alleviate this issue and fixed term posts have been advertised with a view to permanency which can be continued up to a maximum of 4 years. Management expect performance to improve and for pressure to be reduced on existing members of staff.

76. The average attrition rate in the Enquiry Point compares favourably with industry standard attrition rates.

Absence

77. Absence can have an effect on how well a service is provided. Management of the Enquiry Point monitor absence and follow the COPFS sickness absence policy. Amendments will be made to rotas or staff will be offered additional hours if there is a need for cover.

78. Figures provided showed that August and September 2012 had the highest number of absence days. This coincides with the higher turnover of staff during that period where results show that performance fell (see Chapter 9, Monitoring Performance). As indicated above management hope that recruitment of staff will help improve performance.

Overtime/Additional Hours

79. Details of overtime/additional hours showed that in year ending 31 December 2012 a total of 2996¹² additional hours were worked by Enquiry Point staff. This works out at approximately 58 hours per week.

80. Figures provided by COPFS Finance Division showed that in periods 1 – 9 (April to December) of financial year 2012/13¹³, 9.4% of staffing costs related to overtime/additional hours.

81. We wondered if there was an increase in additional hours as a result of high absence and the unusually high turnover of staff in quarter three, however, it was noted that the first quarter also showed a high number of additional hours worked.

82. With the number of additional hours worked and overtime costs we did consider that it would be worth looking at staffing ratios especially at a time of structure change when the Enquiry Point will be taken under the control of the new Customer Care Unit. In the interim, however, a further 5 part-time posts have been advertised.

Training

83. All new staff are expected to complete the COPFS corporate induction package. They are also provided with a standard training pack which includes:

- Cisco agent user guide
- Telephone techniques and hints
- Mandatory e-learning modules
- Reading materials relating to COPFS processes eg solemn, summary, direct measures, witness citations, etc
- COPFS common terminology and jargon

¹² Excludes public holiday overtime and travel time

¹³ Staffing costs before this were not split to show overtime costs

- Crown Office circulars
- Explanations of different courts
- List of towns in different police divisions

84. Further to this they are all given time for a court visit, a visit to a working office, COPFS systems training (PROMIS, SOS, etc) and are provided with on the job training using the telephony system and completion of the database.

85. Research performed by Contact Babel¹⁴ showed that mentoring, real work call-taking and buddying were most effective methods of providing induction all of which is used by the Enquiry Point.

86. Enquiry Point staff advised that the training pack required updating as some have instructions/circulars that others don't. This has come about through new instructions/circulars or change in process being emailed but not all staff copying them and including them in the pack.

RECOMMENDATION 5

It is recommended that the Enquiry Point Training Pack is reviewed and updated to include all new practices and guides.

87. Staff also advised that there was a lot of reading material and it was difficult to get time to read these effectively or do the required online training especially when there is a shortage of staff. They also indicated that there has been a lot of change in COPFS practice and structure recently and it has been difficult to keep up with this.

88. New staff in the Enquiry Point are expected to complete induction training within 4 weeks. However, in reality staff advised that it takes longer than this to become fully productive as they need to be well versed in COPFS policy and practice eg if someone asks what they should do if they cannot attend court as a witness due to illness or how long is it expected to take for a case to be processed through court.

89. This was something that was identified as part of our own customer feedback where it was felt that some operators were 'better than others' and that this could be a result of 'training needs for newer members of staff' or 'depend on experience'.

90. IPS noted while listening into calls during a visit to the Enquiry Point that enquiries are very varied and can be challenging. This again was identified as part of our own survey where COPFS staff indicated that they appreciate the enquiries are wide-ranging and can be difficult.

¹⁴ The UK Contact Centre HR & Operational Benchmarking Report', 2 edition – 2012/13

91. The industry standard¹⁵ to become fully productive is much higher at around 10 weeks so perhaps staff should be given a longer time to become fully versed in all aspects of the COPFS. Staff we spoke to would welcome additional time for training.

RECOMMENDATION 6

It is recommended that consideration is given to allowing additional training time to allow Enquiry Point staff to become fully versed in all aspects of COPFS practice.

92. Other training is identified through performance appraisal and attendance on courses is approved and arranged through the administrative manager however, again staff indicated that it is difficult to get time to attend out of office training especially during staff shortages.

93. Given the unusual situation of 10 part-time vacancies in November 2012, 8 of which have now been filled with a further 5 recently advertised, there will be a proportion of lost time as new recruits learn on the job and experienced staff support them therefore there may be an impact on performance during this period.

94. One particular area of training that staff felt would be useful that is not included in the training programme relates to dealing with emotional callers. Although these callers are likely to be passed to the VIA Officer, Enquiry Point operators still have to take the initial call and would welcome inclusion of this type of training.

RECOMMENDATION 7

It is recommended that training on how to deal with emotional callers is identified and included in the Enquiry Point training programme.

Call Monitoring

95. Call monitoring is useful for coaching and development. It can be done by double jacking; silent call monitoring or call recording equipment.

96. The Enquiry Point uses call monitoring as a training tool. Managers can listen into conversations and look out for good conversation indicators such as those described in COI's 'Better Practice Guidance for Government Contact Centres':

- Initial greeting
- Customer acknowledgement
- Using courteous statements

¹⁵ As described in Contact Babel study 'The UK Contact Centre HR & Operational Benchmarking Report', 2 edition – 2012/13

- Displaying empathy
- Keeping customer informed when keying in information
- Listening effectively
- Quality of voice tone and pitch
- Effective use of questions
- Adhering to script
- Using positive words
- Reaffirming call outcomes
- Ending the call – offering additional help to the caller

97. In addition all calls since the establishment of the Enquiry Point have been recorded. Calls identified by managers as particularly good or bad are used as part of a training programme. This is useful use of the available material.

Performance Appraisal:

98. The COPFS performance appraisal system is followed in the Enquiry Point. All staff received their annual and interims report on time where objectives were agreed and training identified.

Keeping Staff Informed:

99. Managers advised IPS that staff are kept informed through team briefings and email. However they acknowledge that team briefings are not held regularly as there is difficulty taking staff offline due to the constant need to cover phones in order to provide a good service. In attempts to address this the administrative manager now tries to speak with three staff at a time and refers to a list of items to be discussed. This is a sensible alternative.

100. Staff we spoke to indicated that team briefings are not held often enough and in fact they had not had one in three months at the time of our visit. They see team briefings as a good forum that allows them to be kept up to date and raise issues or suggestions for improvement. They indicated that they would like more communication and would like to be involved in team building exercises.

101. There has been considerable change in COPFS practice and structure recently and team briefs are very good way of communicating such change. It is therefore important that staff are kept up to date and feel involved.

RECOMMENDATION 8

It is recommended that in accordance with COPFS policy efforts are made to carry out team briefings at least monthly.

Autumn 2012 People Survey

102. The COPFS people survey 2012 showed an 86% response rate from Enquiry Point. In the main the scores are slightly higher compared with the overall COPFS analysis.

103. Low points for the Enquiry Point where there is a lower score than average COPFS score include: having choice in deciding how work is done; manager's openness to ideas; recognition of a job well done; working as a team to find ways to improve the service and come up with better ways of doing things. These reflect what has been said above regarding team briefings where there is little opportunity to raise issues and suggestions for improvement.

104. Low points where the percentage of positive responses are low (below 30%) include: the feeling of being involved and deciding how to do the work; how learning and development has helped improve performance and develop career; opportunities to develop; how well change is managed. Again this reflects lack of involvement and how staff feel about training.

105. High points where the percentage of positive responses are high (over 70%) include an interest in the work; understanding of COPFS purpose and objectives; consideration of life outside work; clarity of what is expected; good work/life balance. This indicates that staff know what is expected of them and that they have a good work/life balance probably since the majority work part-time.

CHAPTER 6

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

106. A business case was created by the Enquiry Point Project Board in 2008. This included the costs associated with the Enquiry Point.

107. We note from the business case that there was an initial one off cost of £152K for refurbishing, furnishing, IT and resilience while the Enquiry Point was being set up. We were unable to confirm this with COPFS finance division as they advised that records were not retained of the actual set up costs.

108. Estimations in staffing costs were greatly reduced before full implementation of the Enquiry Point as a result of reviewing the actual number of calls and average length of calls. It was initially expected that there would be a need for 32 staff but this was reduced to 21 and then again to 14.

109. Figures provided by the COPFS finance division relating to salaries and office costs since the set up of the Enquiry Point showed consistent expenditure over the 4 years. These figures, however, did not include costs relating to accommodation and utilities since the Enquiry Point is located in the building occupied by the Procurator Fiscal's Office Dumbarton and it was agreed at the start that such costs would be included as part of Argyll and Clyde's overall budget for the Dumbarton office.

110. At present costs relating to the Enquiry Point are split between three budgets:

- ISD for hardware and software
- Dumbarton Procurator Fiscal's Office for utilities
- Enquiry Point – staffing and other costs

RECOMMENDATION 9

It is recommended that management under the new Customer Care Unit identify and monitor all costs relating to the Enquiry Point in order to realise the true cost of running the Enquiry Point.

CHAPTER 7

RISK MANAGEMENT AND CONTINGENCY

111. Risk is the potential that an action or event will lead to a loss or undesirable outcome. Risk management is identification, prioritisation and treatment of risks to minimize, monitor, and control the likelihood of an unfortunate event or to maximize opportunities.

112. The Enquiry Point does not have a risk register detailing risks that may impact on achievement of objectives or in the ability to provide a service. However, there is a business continuity plan in place which details responsible persons and actions to be taken in the event of loss of service. For example:

- local power outage/IT issues – trained operators from Paisley or Highlands and Islands will log on and answer calls
- fire – re-locate to Scottish Prosecution College, Glasgow

113. It was noted that there is still further work or testing to be done in relation to some circumstances, for example, when BT equipment fails or IT services fail.

RECOMMENDATION 10

It is recommended that the Enquiry Point formally identifies and records all risks which may impact on the delivery of services. These risks should be prioritised and controls or counter measures identified to limit or help prevent negative outcomes.

RECOMMENDATION 11

It is also recommended that actions already identified in the Enquiry Point business continuity plan be followed up and tested.

CHAPTER 8

EQUALITY

114. The general duty of the Equality Duty 2010 came into force on 5 April 2011 and provides a single, consistent framework covering age, disability status, ethnicity, gender/sex, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion/belief, sexual orientation, and transgender identity. It requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct prohibited by the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

115. The Equality Duty ensures that public bodies consider the needs of all when providing a service.

116. There are an estimated 450,000 deaf, hard of hearing, speech-impaired and deaf blind people in the UK that cannot use a standard telephone. For them textphone communications provides a vital lifeline along with TextDirect and Typetalk¹⁶.

117. Similarly there many people in Scotland whose main language is not English.

118. Measures taken by the Enquiry Point to deal with equality include:

- Languageline - a telephone translation and interpreting service for callers who do not speak English. It allows three way conversations between caller, interpreter and Enquiry Point. All Enquiry Point staff have had training on use of Languageline and have the unique Enquiry Point code attached to their phones.
- Happy to Translate – a service that bridges gaps between organisations and service users who struggle to communicate in English
- Typetalk – The RNID Typetalk prefix number of 18001 is detailed on the COPFS website and standard letters. This allows people with communication difficulties to make contact through text.
- Email – enquiries can be sent via email

¹⁶ Source RNID Typetalk

119. In addition staff are provided with equality training and recently received a presentation from an organisation that deals with Aspergers and Autism and a presentation from the West of Scotland Regional Equality Council Ltd (WSREC). Staff indicated that they found this interesting and helpful.

120. It is considered that the Enquiry Point is respectful of equality and is happy to put measures in place to address differences in people's needs. The Ofcom¹⁷ website provides good practice tips¹⁸ for businesses using call centres to ensure that they are accessible.

¹⁷ Independent regulator and competition authority for the UK communications industries
¹⁸ Study – 'Disabled customers and call centres'

CHAPTER 9

MONITORING PERFORMANCE:

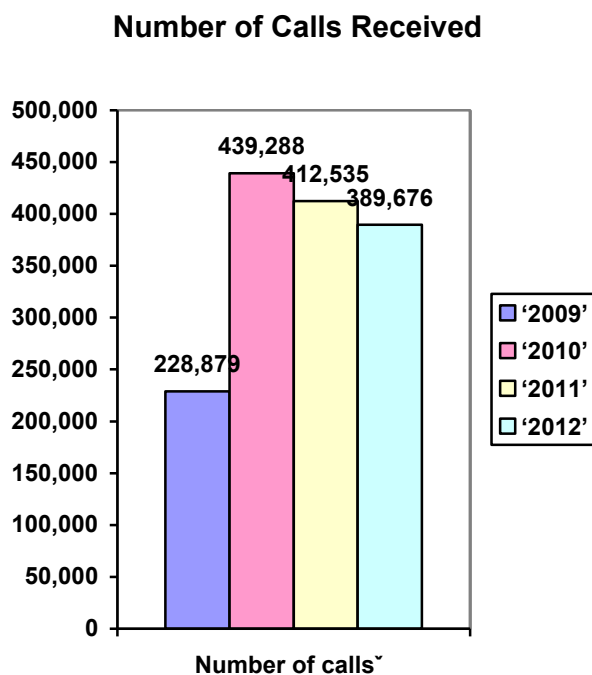
121. The Central Office of Information (COI) in its 'Better Practice Guidance for Government Contact Centres' provides advice on monitoring performance. It states that in general standard weekly reports can include:

- Contact volumes by source (eg media)
- Contact volumes by region/postcode
- Contact durations
- Contact waiting times
- Lost/abandoned calls
- Complaint volumes and nature of complaint
- Performance against service standards

122. As described earlier the administrative manager monitors performance on a daily basis and reports to the business manager who in turn reports to senior management. Enquiry Point operators indicated that they were all aware of targets.

Number of Calls

123. The following table shows the number of calls received at the Enquiry Point in years 2009 to 2012:



124. It can be seen that there was a large increase (192%) in the number of calls received in 2010 compared with 2009. This would perhaps have been due to a settling in period and change of practice to make the Enquiry Point the first point of contact. The number of calls since have been steadily falling.

Contact Volumes by Type

125. We reviewed Enquiry Point records relating to calls during period 01/05/12 to 30/11/12. The breakdown of type of call can be seen in Appendix 2. These calls can be further broken down into reason for call as shown in Appendix 3.

126. The breakdown of calls received during the 6 month period show that by far calls received from witnesses were the highest at 29,096 followed by solicitors at 22,824, Police at 14,388, accused persons at 12,428 and non police reporting agencies (eg Health and Safety Executive) at 9064.

127. Reasons for calls from the top 4 types¹⁹ show the following:

- **Witnesses** – enquiries relating to witness citation were most common at 2,877 followed by calls relating to excusal at court at 1,974
- **Solicitors** – by far calls to discuss cases were the most frequent at 18,627 during the 6 month period followed by queries relating to disclosure at 1,642 and calls to leave messages at 1,122
- **Police** – enquiries relating to case progress were most common at 3,166 during the 6 month period followed by calls looking for advice and guidance at 2,386 and calls relating to excusals from court at 1,756
- **Accused Persons** – enquiries relating to fixed penalties and fiscal fines were most frequent at 5,319 during the 6 month period followed by queries relating to pleas at 1,484 and property at 1,446

128. This type of detailed information can be passed on to management on request for monitoring purposes and in fact the last management report relating to quarter 4 of 2012 issued to the Crown Agent highlighted the top call type for the quarter along with reason.

129. IPS were advised that the Enquiry Point is still evolving and that further categories of caller or reason for call can be added to the database as need is identified.

Contact by region/postcode:

130. This type of information is not collected and we do not see that there is a need for such at this time.

¹⁹ Calls from non police reporting agencies were not broken down any further

Call Duration

131. Management advised that they do not have a formal target for duration of call as they understand that providing a quality service can't be rushed. There is however an informal target of 4 minutes.

132. Figures provided by the Enquiry Point show that in the first 6 months of 2012 the average call duration was 2 minutes 46 seconds and the latter 6 months was 3 minutes and 6 seconds. This falls well within the informal 4 minute target and compares favourably with the industry standard²⁰ mean average call duration for service calls.

133. Staff indicated that on occasion calls can last for 20 minutes and that this does impact on performance.

Waiting Time

134. Management reports²¹ show that the average call waiting time for calendar year 2011 was 44 seconds. In the first 6 months of 2012 the average waiting time was 57 seconds but in the latter 6 months it had increased quite considerably to 2 minutes and 16 seconds. One reason given for this was staff shortage. There were 10 part-time vacancies during that period, however, at December 2012, 8 of these positions had been filled with a further 5 advertised in February 2013.

135. The average waiting time for calls to be answered in the Enquiry Point was found to be higher than the industry standard²² average speed to answer even at its lowest in 2011 and particularly in the second half of 2012.

Abandoned Calls

136. The following table shows the average abandoned call rate for years 2009 to 2012:

Year	Abandoned Calls ²³ (target 10%)
2009	11.5%
2010	9.9%
2011	9.5%
2012	12.89%

²⁰ Referenced in Contact Babel study 'The UK Contact Centre HR & Operational Benchmarking Report', 2 edition – 2012/13'

²¹ Source – COPFS Enquiry Point

²² Referenced in Contact Babel study 'The UK Contact Centre HR & Operational Benchmarking Report', 2 edition – 2012/13'

²³ Source – COPFS Enquiry Point

137. The figures show that the abandoned call rate fell in 2010 and again in 2011 but increased in 2012. A further breakdown of 2012 showed that the 10% target was met in quarters 1 and 2 at 8.7% and 9.97% respectively but increased sharply in quarter 3 to 20.64 % and decreased again to 12.25% in quarter 4. Again this corresponds with the shortage of staff in quarter 3 which has been partly addressed in quarter 4 as demonstrated by the decrease.

138. Overall the abandoned call rate at the Enquiry Point exceeds the industry standards²⁴ call abandonment rate.

Transferred Calls

139. The following table shows the average transferred call rate for years 2009 to 2012:

Year	Transferred Calls²⁵ (target 20% to 2011 and 15% from 2012)
2009	24.4%
2010	20.2%
2011	18.5%
2012	11.1%

140. The target for transferring calls was changed in January 2012 to transfer 15% rather than 20% (or deal with 85% of calls at first point of contact rather than 80%). IPS wondered whether this was entirely realistic and was a target that could not be achieved but we were advised that the change was based on past experience and results of monitoring showing a downward trend in the need for calls to be transferred.

141. It can be seen that the number of calls being transferred has indeed reduced over the period which shows that more calls are being dealt with by the Enquiry Point. The industry standard²⁶ for transferred calls is much lower however it is unfair to measure against this standard given that a proportion of calls received will always be required to be passed on to legal members of staff eg solicitors wishing to discuss cases (see breakdown of calls from solicitors at Appendix 3).

First Call Resolution

142. The COI states that first contact resolution can be defined as the percentage of transactions successfully completed during the first contact made. However, this is difficult to measure given that on occasion the most appropriate response could be to pass the person on to another part of the

²⁴ Referenced in Contact Babel study 'The UK Contact Centre HR & Operational Benchmarking Report', 2 edition – 2012/13'

²⁵ Source – COPFS Enquiry Point

²⁶ Referenced in Contact Babel study 'The UK Contact Centre HR & Operational Benchmarking Report', 2 edition – 2012/13'

organisation who may or may not be able to deal with it. Another difficulty can be if there is no measurement of whether the enquiry was completely dealt with or whether the caller has been asked to call back.

143. It could be said that Enquiry Point calls that have not been transferred have been dealt with but this cannot be a true indication of 'first call resolution' as there is no measurement of whether callers have been asked to call back or if a transferred call has been completely dealt with.

RECOMMENDATION 12

It is recommended that management introduce some form of measurement of whether calls are completely resolved at first contact.

Complaints Procedure

144. Complaints should be treated seriously, should be dealt with promptly and in accordance with an organisation's complaints procedure. Acknowledgements should be given and responses should include details of who to contact next if appropriate.

145. The system used to record and monitor customer feedback including complaints, compliments, comments and suggestions within the COPFS is called 'Respond'. It also records and monitors requests for information under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, the Data Protection Act 1998 and Ministerial Correspondence.

146. Staff at the Enquiry Point indicated that not all complaints or indeed compliments received were recorded on the official system.

147. In attempting to review customer feedback we noted that the Respond system does not have a particular search category for the Enquiry Point. As this unit is based in the Dumbarton Procurator Fiscal's Office feedback relating to this office was identified and those that made reference to the Enquiry Point were provided for review.

148. 12 complaints made reference to the Enquiry Point during 2011 and 2012. The following describes reasons for complaint:

- Caller was unhappy at way they had been spoken to
- Solicitor unhappy with length of time to answer
- Caller on hold for a long time then cut off
- Information requested was not received

149. It was noted that there did not appear to be a response to 4 of the 12 complaints in the Respond system. This was checked further with management who confirmed that there appears to be no response.

RECOMMENDATION 13

It is recommended that a category for the Enquiry Point is added to the 'Respond' system and that notification of all customer feedback received (whether a complaint, compliment, suggestion or comment) is formally recorded and that responses are issued and also recorded in the system.

150. We make reference in Chapters 10 and 11 to our own customer feedback exercise.

Other

151. Another means of assessing performance is independent test calling (mystery shopping). This requires to be done in significantly statistical volumes to be effective. We did not have time to perform such testing in this review.

CHAPTER 10

PARTNERS

152. In establishing a contact centre consideration should be given to how it will affect stakeholders.

153. We were advised that meetings were held with some criminal justice partners during the set up of the Enquiry Point to advise them of its existence and to gain an understanding of their needs in relation to such a service.

154. Further talks took place with criminal justice partners (Police and Bar Association) local to Argyll and Clyde in 2010/11 relating to developments at the Enquiry Point, for example, extending hours, pleas hotline, etc.

155. The Enquiry Point should be the first point of contact for partners and agencies although we were advised that some, particularly Sheriff Clerks and Police, generally use direct dial numbers and email which would be their preference anyway due to the need for frequent contact. It is within guidelines that direct numbers can be given out and as described earlier some staff do add their own direct dial number to letters.

156. The Enquiry Point carried out a customer satisfaction survey in 2012 and partner agencies may be captured during random questioning. However, the type of caller is not recorded for this purpose therefore we were unable to ascertain views from partners from this exercise.

157. In the hope to capture views from partner agencies we carried out our own feedback survey. A questionnaire was issued to a selection of Police offices, Prisons, Bar Associations, Public Defenders, Children's Reporters and Victim Support. We received replies from representatives from Police, Solicitors and Victim Support. They were asked to rate their satisfaction²⁷ with certain conditions and the following results (shown as satisfied or above) were found:

- 28% - 'time taken to answer the call'
- 12% - 'time spent on hold'
- 32% - 'total duration of call'
- 68% - 'professionalism of Enquiry Point operator'
- 72% - 'clarity of information provided'
- 68% - 'call was dealt with accurately'
- 64% - 'call was dealt with completely'
- 30% - 'follow up action took place'

²⁷ Very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, very dissatisfied

158. It is clear that there is some dissatisfaction with time taken to answer the call, the time spent on hold and the total duration of the call. As discussed earlier in the report there had been 10 vacancies in the Enquiry Point and with the recruitment of 8 new operators it is hoped that performance will improve.

159. Polite and friendly operators are essential in a contact centre and we found high satisfaction with the professionalism of operators, the clarity of information received and with whether the call was dealt with accurately and completely.

160. We also asked whether further calls had to be made to obtain information sought. 36% said yes, 52% said no and for 12% it was not applicable as they did not ask for information to be sent.

161. The overall satisfaction with the services of the Enquiry Point using a rating scale 1 to 5 (with 1 being least satisfied and 5 being most satisfied) was 2.92 (or 58%).

162. Additional comments provided in the survey included the following:

- Would benefit from direct line for partner agencies rather than listening to introduction that is essentially for the public
- Too long waiting for an answer (up to 20 minutes)
- Feedback from witnesses saying they can't get through and calling from a mobile is expensive
- Lack of consistency regarding what can be intimated
- Passed from pillar to post

163. The above exercise has shown that there is some satisfaction and dissatisfaction from criminal justice partners' point of view concerning different aspects of the services provided by the Enquiry Point. It is important that partner agencies views are gathered to ensure measures can be taken to ensure that their needs are met.

164. A review of contact type and reason for call over a period of 6 months showed a large proportion of police enquiries would have required the caller to be transferred (looking for advice and guidance, excusals, service of documents, warrants, mail, etc). Similarly most of solicitors calls by far related to discussion of cases again where the caller would need to be transferred to the relevant member of legal staff (see Appendix 3 for breakdown).

RECOMMENDATION 14

It is recommended that the Enquiry Point continue to seek criminal justice partner views in relation to services provided by the Enquiry Point and to identify whether there is scope to provide a separate telephone number for them given that a large proportion of their calls require to be transferred to the relevant legal member of staff.

CHAPTER 11

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

165. Customer satisfaction is a measure of how an organisation meets customer expectations. For contact centres this can be measured through the following:

- accuracy of data captured
- first time resolution
- call monitoring
- recording calls
- good 'inclusivity' practice to ensure accessibility for all including people with disabilities and ethnic minorities
- achievement of service level agreements eg time to answer, abandoned calls
- customer satisfaction surveys

166. Most of the above have already been captured in this report so for the purposes of this Chapter we will concentrate on customer satisfaction.

167. The Varney²⁸ review identified 7 characteristics of excellent contact:

- Each contact is easy
- Each contact fulfils a need
- Each contact is valuable
- Contact delivers policy
- Government is a trusted point of contact
- Government knows its customers
- Government is a world leader in delivering public service contact

168. Conversely, COI²⁹ describe poor communication as:

- Having to repeat or request information more than once
- Long delays before a contact is answered or dealt with
- Long delays to answer after a transfer has been made
- Having to pay for a call while waiting in a queuing system
- Unfriendly and unhelpful agents
- Being put through or signposted to the wrong place
- Delays in finding citizens' details

²⁸ Service Transformation: 'A better service for citizens and businesses, a better deal for the taxpayer' Dec 2006 – Chapter 7 – Contact Centres

²⁹ 'Better Practice Guidance for Government Contact Centres'

- Agents who do not give their names
- Short opening hours
- Poor or complex automated or interactive voice response
- Uninformative queuing system messages
- And outward contact (eg call back) that is promised but does not materialise
- Rushed contact
- Fulfilment materials not received or received late, or incorrect materials supplied
- Agents unable to access accurate, up to date information
- No email confirmation when contact has been made
- Slow or no response to email queries
- Inability to determine the status of the query

169. The Enquiry Point carries out its own customer satisfaction survey each year by asking a question at the end of the call. As indicated earlier their survey is not broken down by type of caller and is merely an exercise to rate satisfaction.

170. The results from 2012 survey show the following:

Enquiry Point Customer Satisfaction Survey 2012	
Satisfied	3341
Unsatisfied	239
TOTAL	3580

171. The above survey shows 93% satisfaction. This compares with 97% satisfaction in 2011. Of those that were dissatisfied in 2012 the following reasons were noted:

- Background noise
- Call queue time
- Hunt Group ringing out
- Professionalism in the Department
- Relevant information

172. By far the main reason for dissatisfaction was 'Hunt Group Ringing Out' followed by 'Call Queue Time'.

173. We also performed our own satisfaction surveys, one for COPFS staff relating to calls transferred to them which we discuss in this chapter and another to outside agencies the results of which are noted in Chapter 10 – 'Partners'.

174. Feedback from COPFS staff showed the following:

- 91% felt that it was appropriate to transfer the call
- 83% felt that the services provided by the Enquiry Point allows them to be more effective in the work (eg reduced time spent on telephone calls)
- 81% responded positively to the professionalism of Enquiry Point operators
- 83% responded positively to the quality of information passed to them.

175. Further comments, some of which have been mentioned throughout the report, include:

- Calls transferred to the wrong team/person
- Calls transferred without any introduction
- Vague and incorrect information
- Some calls could have been dealt with by Enquiry Point operators
- Some operators 'better than others' probably 'due to training needs'
- 'Polite, friendly, pleasant, courteous and helpful' staff
- Impressed with the work done by Enquiry Point who do a 'fantastic' job
- 'Major benefit' and a 'valued' and 'quality' service to the COPFS which has had a 'positive impact'
- 'Prompt and efficient' service
- Appreciation of challenging role with varied work
- Understanding that Federation changes cause confusion
- Background noise too loud
- Give out too many direct dial numbers
- Complaints from Solicitors that it can take 15 minutes to get through

176. By far the most frequent comment related to calls being transferred to the wrong person/team. We have mentioned this particular issue in Chapter 4 – 'Process'. Similarly some issues described above such as training, time waiting to get through and praise such as polite and friendly staff, have also been covered elsewhere in the report while others, for example, background noise, handing out too many direct dial numbers, transferring calls without any introduction should be addressed. Reference should also be made to dissatisfaction with specific issues noted in Chapter 10.

RECOMMENDATION 15

It is recommended that Enquiry Point Managers address issues highlighted in feedback and not covered elsewhere in this report such as background noise, handing out direct dial numbers, transferring calls with no introduction and lack of consistency in what can and cannot be intimated.

177. There is no doubt that staffing issues such as high turnover and absence along with system crashes, maintenance etc will affect the level of customer service. However, when looking at customer satisfaction it has to be noted that overall satisfaction is very high relating to calls transferred to COPFS staff with a lower satisfaction from outside agencies as shown in Chapter 10.

178. The use of customer feedback is an important tool which will support in the endeavour to improve services and should continue to be used by the Enquiry Point perhaps with a further breakdown to identify specific issues affecting specific groups. Use should also be made of feedback from registered complaints as described in Chapter 9 at 'Complaints Procedure'.

CHAPTER 12

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

179. It is clear that COPFS is committed to meeting the information needs of customers both through the statement to do so in the Strategic Plan 2012–2015 and the provision of services at the Enquiry Point. This will be further improved with the establishment of a Customer Care Unit in March 2013 which will help enhance customer focus.

180. We note that there are some areas that would benefit from some strengthening to ensure effectiveness as described below.

181. The telephony system used by the Enquiry Point is adequate for needs however there are some issues highlighted in the report that impact on business performance which are outwith the direct control of the Enquiry Point, for example, slowness, maintenance or crashing of COPFS systems thus limiting access to information and slow updating of case progress.

182. It is highlighted that small changes such as ensuring the number to call from mobile phones is detailed on standard letters; updating scripts; up to date contact lists³⁰ and consideration of separate number for partner agencies to call would increase customer satisfaction.

183. We make reference in the report to standards that can be referred to that provide advice and guidance on how to deliver an efficient and effective contact centre service.

184. There is a willingness in the Enquiry Point to continually improve services and increase service delivery through involvement in new projects and collection of feedback for analysis in testing new concepts.

185. We highlight specific issues relating to staffing that affect performance such as high turnover, training and lack of communication however we note that management are making attempts to resolve such issues such as filling vacant posts, monitoring day to day delivery and plans to communicate more frequently.

186. The ongoing cost of the Enquiry Point has never been identified due to the split of expenditure between three budgets.

187. It is noted that although there are contingency plans in place in the event of loss of service there is a need to test some of these plans and there is no formal register of risks or counter measures.

188. We consider there to be good accessibility measures in place for people with disabilities and ethnic minorities.

³⁰ There is an understanding of difficulties in keeping lists up to date due to Federation change and staff movement

189. Performance is measured in various formats and information can be made available to COPFS senior management on request.

190. Monitoring highlighted a drop in performance in the second half of 2012 which can be attributed to loss of staff. New staff have since been recruited.

191. A comparison against industry standards shows that the Enquiry Point performs well in some areas such as call duration but less well in other areas such as waiting time and abandoned calls. It is noted that the Enquiry Point's own target for abandoned calls was not met in 2012. Again lack of staff has been a factor in this.

192. We note that the formal COPFS system for recording feedback (including complaints, compliments, comments and suggestions) did not easily identify those relating to the Enquiry Point and that there is an awareness in the Enquiry Point that not all feedback is formally recorded. In addition there appears to be no response to 4 from 12 complaints registered.

193. It is important to communicate with stakeholders to obtain their views when providing a service. We consider that the Enquiry Point could do more in this respect especially with criminal justice partners.

194. Overall customer satisfaction shown in both Enquiry Point's exercise and our own feedback survey was positive with comments such as 'polite and friendly' staff and a 'valued quality' service. However there was some dissatisfaction noted which requires to be addressed such as transfer of calls with vague, little or no information; time hanging on the line or to answer calls; unhappiness at the way they were spoken to; lack of consistency in what can and cannot be intimated.

195. The following recommendations have been made:

RECOMMENDATION 1

It is recommended that good practice standards for Government Contact Centres are looked at with a view to incorporating those that would be useful/beneficial to the COPFS Enquiry Point especially now that the Enquiry Point will become part of the newly established Customer Care Unit.

RECOMMENDATION 2

It is recommended that all standard letters include the Enquiry Point telephone number to call from mobile phones.

RECOMMENDATION 3

It is recommended that a reminder is issued to Procurator Fiscal offices to ensure that their contact lists are kept up to date.

RECOMMENDATION 4

It is recommended that scripts used in the Enquiry Point are reviewed and updated where there has been a change in practice.

RECOMMENDATION 5

It is recommended that the Enquiry Point Training Pack is reviewed and updated to include all new practices and guides.

RECOMMENDATION 6

It is recommended that consideration is given to allowing additional training time to allow Enquiry Point staff to become fully versed in all aspects of COPFS practice.

RECOMMENDATION 7

It is recommended that training on how to deal with emotional customers is identified and included in the Enquiry Point training programme.

RECOMMENDATION 8

It is recommended that in accordance with COPFS policy efforts are made to carry out team briefings at least monthly.

RECOMMENDATION 9

It is recommended that management under the new Customer Care Unit identify and monitor all costs relating to the Enquiry Point in order to realise the true cost of running the Enquiry Point.

RECOMMENDATION 10

It is recommended that the Enquiry Point formally identifies and records all risks which may impact on the delivery of services. These risks should be prioritised and controls or counter measures identified to limit or help prevent negative outcomes.

RECOMMENDATION 11

It is also recommended that actions already identified in the Enquiry Point business continuity plan be followed up and tested.

RECOMMENDATION 12

It is recommended that management introduce some form of measurement of whether calls are completely resolved at first contact.

RECOMMENDATION 13

It is recommended that a category for the Enquiry Point is added to the 'Respond' system and that notification of all customer feedback received (whether a complaint, compliment, suggestion or comment) is formally recorded and that responses are issued and also recorded in the system.

RECOMMENDATION 14

It is recommended that the Enquiry Point continue to seek criminal justice partner views in relation to services provided by the Enquiry Point and to identify whether there is scope to provide a separate telephone number for them given that a large proportion of their calls require to be transferred to the relevant legal member of staff.

RECOMMENDATION 15

It is recommended that Enquiry Point Managers address issues highlighted in feedback and not covered elsewhere in this report such as background noise, handing out direct dial numbers, transferring calls with no introduction and lack of consistency in what can and cannot be intimated.

Appendix 1

Central Office of Information advice on data that should be collected in contact centres

It is usual practice for government departments to collect at least the following data from contacts:

- Name
- What prompted the call eg media
- Gender (silent question)
- Whether call is on behalf of an organisation or individual
- Job title
- Industry sector
- Organisation size (if relevant)
- Address
- Post code
- Date of birth or age band
- Whether the caller can be contacted again for research purposes
- Time of call
- Date of call
- Reason for call
- Outcome of call
- Information requested or given
- Requested literature to be fulfilled
- Where to contact is being referred to
- Call back/follow up

Appendix 2

Breakdown of Type of Call 01/05/12 to 30/11/12

Type of Call ³¹	Frequency
Access to witness statement	53
Accused	12,428
Cadder	2
Business Call (eg supplies)	144
Complaints against police	25
Children's Reporter	133
Complaint Handling	23
Criminal Injuries Board	24
Deaths	4,643
Expenses	5,092
General	3,305
Hang-up (no-one on call)	1,053
Insurance Company	216
Non Police Reporting Agency	9,064
Police	14,388
Press	95
Prison	476
Public (queries)	2,255
Sheriff Clerk	203
Social Work	626
Solicitors	22,824
Staff call	509
System Offline	305
Tayside Victim Support Scotland	164
Text message pilot – non witness	65
Text message pilot – witness query	6
VIA – Solemn	530
VIA – Summary	704
Victim	3,410
Witness	29,096
TOTAL	111,861

³¹ Source – COPFS Enquiry Point

Appendix 3

Breakdown of Reason for Calls 01/05/12 to 30/11/12

Reason for Call from Witness	Frequency
Address	596
Appeals	19
Attendance	258
General Questions	16,382
Bail	70
Case Progress	927
Charges	423
Citation	2,877
Complaint	25
Court Result	1,020
Disposal	282
Evidence	375
Excusal	1,974
Expenses	1,140
Intimidation	55
Pleas	170
Precognition	86
Property	673
Standby	670
Statement Access	80
Returning a Call	994
TOTAL	29,096

Reason for Call from Solicitor	Frequency
Alternative to prosecution	13
Custody/bail	849
Death	21
Disclosure	1,642
Discuss cases	18,627
Messages	1,122
Misc	58
Plea	492
TOTAL	22,824

Breakdown of Reason for Calls 01/05/12 to 30/11/12 (contd.)

Reason for Call from Police	Frequency
2 citations on same date	59
Advice and guidance	2,386
Case progress	3,166
Court result	575
Disclosure	77
Excusal	1,756
Mail/emails	1,640
Productions	593
Returning a call	445
Search warrant/general warrant	1,121
Service of documents	1,142
Standby	1,059
Subject sheet	369
TOTAL	14,388

Reason for Call from Accused	Frequency
Appeals	8
Attendance	1,189
Bail	196
Case progress	1,228
Change of Address	89
Complaint document	160
Conviction	128
Diversion	79
Evidence	253
Fixed Penalty/Fiscal Fine	5,319
Outstanding charges	284
Pleas	1,484
Police	5
Previous Convictions	70
Property	1,446
Solicitor	53
Warnings	94
Warrants	343
TOTAL	12,428

Central Office of Information checklist to help ensure you are complying with the main requirements of the Data Protection Act

- Assume that what you are doing is covered by the Act
- Consider the data protection implications, and make a formal note about any issues
- Think about your current and future data capture needs
- Capture only the data you need
- Consider any sensitive data issues
- Make sure that the service provider is bound by the provisions of the Act and is secure
- Make sure that arrangements for storing and transferring data are fully secure (usernames, passwords, secure transmission methodologies, use of encryption, etc)
- Make provision for data access and amendment and ensure that access is granted to the minimum number of people who require it
- Where appropriate use 'opt-in' as best practice



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