# National Contact Management Strategy (NCMS)

This document has been produced by the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) on behalf of the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO).

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Guidance produced by the NPIA should be used by chief officers to shape the development of policy, thereby ensuring that the quality of service delivery meets the expectations of our customers and stakeholders. The implementation of all guidance/practice advice will require operational choices to be made at local level in order to achieve the appropriate police response.

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## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Business Case For Change</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The NCMS Strategy Framework</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principles And Critical Success Factors</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCMS Strategy Map</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivering Strategic And Local Benefits</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Foreword

The first and, in many cases, the most important contact the general public has with the police service is when individuals seek assistance. Contact management, in its many forms, is the critical gateway to the service. It is about a professional service delivery, the identification of threat, risk and vulnerability, effective prioritisation and a response that secures public safety, increases customer satisfaction and improves public trust and confidence in the service.

I have heard it said that every contact leaves a lasting impression, leading to either a positive or negative effect on public trust and confidence in the service. In this environment, the importance of getting contact management right must be clear to all: “making every contact count” is at the heart of an approach that focuses on providing accessible citizen focused services that meet the diverse needs of all our communities.

The role our people play in communicating with the communities we serve is pivotal to achieving an appropriate response and effective resolution. At a time when the service faces increasing pressure on resources, good judgement displayed by empowered staff will help ensure that we efficiently deliver strategic commitments such as the Policing Pledge and value for money policing services.

My personal thanks are extended to all those who have been involved in creating this National Contact Management Strategy. I am confident that those efforts have created a positive way forward to improve contact management in the police service.

Assistant Chief Constable Ian Dyson
National Contact Management, ACPO lead.

‘Making every contact count’ is at the heart of an approach that focuses on providing accessible citizen focused services that meet the diverse needs of all our communities.
Overview

Mission:

‘Providing excellent customer service: responding to the needs and expectations of all communities in a way that builds trust and confidence in policing. Empowering our staff to deliver high quality contact services: recognising and rewarding excellence in order that the police service is an employer of choice. Promoting a citizen focused culture at the heart of policing, where improved efficiency and value for money is achieved through collaboration with partners and better use of resources.’

Vision:

‘Making every contact count: delivering services that meet individual needs, reassuring our communities and increasing public confidence in policing.’

Principles:

The NCMS is built around an enabling framework of principles that support delivery of the contact management mission and vision at a local level. The principles, explained in more detail at page 13, are:

Principle 1: Customer
Principle 2: Leadership
Principle 3: People
Principle 4: Finance
Principle 5: Knowledge
Principle 6: Demand
Principle 7: Resources
Principle 8: Partners

Introduction

This strategy recognises that contact management is a common and critical thread that runs throughout policing. It is one of the most important policing activities and it is vital to the effective delivery of core operational services, which ultimately shape customer satisfaction and influence public confidence in the service.

As the demands placed upon policing become more complicated and the resources more stretched, it is critical that contact management interactions deliver the best use of resources and provide value for money services, whilst consistently meeting the needs and expectations of the public. Contact management in this environment is truly about “making every contact count” both for the public and the service at large.

The National Contact Management Strategy (NCMS) creates:

- A citizen focused ‘vision’ for contact management that seeks to maximise the quality of contact between the public and the police and achieve a positive impact in terms of improved satisfaction with service delivery and enhanced public confidence in policing.

- An enabling framework for service delivery improvement, built around a series of ‘principles’ and ‘critical success factors’ (CSFs) that promote key activities and behaviours leading to improved efficiency, productivity and performance of contact management structures, systems and processes.

It is important to stress that the NCMS and the aligned National Contact Management Principles and Guidance (NCMPG) deal with contact management as an end-to-end process, where business systems and processes work across the organisation to deliver added value and performance improvement. It recognises that true efficiency comes from looking at the business as a whole and provides real opportunities to work in collaboration with others in order to deliver sustainable service improvement.
Context

Contact management should be seen in the context of contact that exists between citizens (the public) and the police service. Whilst much of that contact is via telephone, contact management is actually broader than this. It also involves technologies such as SMS and voicemail and direct forms of ‘face-to-face contact’, whether through front counters, neighbourhood bases or other contact between front-line police staff and the public.

Historically, the emphasis of contact management has been on improving the ‘first contact’ experience, particularly in terms of our response to telephone contact via call centres. The NCMS recognises that contact interactions occur across varied channels, many away from the contact centre, and that delivering real improvements in customer satisfaction and public confidence outcomes requires a joined-up (or end-to-end) approach across force business, system and service delivery processes.

Strategic Drivers

Policing in England and Wales is underpinned by the ethos that it is undertaken with the consent and support of the public. Central to retaining public consent and support is maintaining the public’s confidence that when they call for assistance the police will respond effectively and in a timely manner.

This expectation goes right to the heart of effective contact management. Our service has to be accessible and responsive; providing the right service, at the right time, to consistently high standards and in such a way that our diverse communities feel safe and have trust and confidence in what we do. This NCMS ethos aligns well with the vision of successful 21st century policing identified by Sir Ronnie Flanagan’s Review of Policing (2008).

The importance of public confidence is at the heart of the Home Office Policing Green Paper: From the Neighbourhood to the National: Policing Our Communities Together (2008). It sets out a new vision for policing; based on the single numerical confidence target to drive forward the provision of a more consistent, visible and accessible service, that meets public needs and expectations, deals with local priorities and keeps people informed.

In the Policing Pledge (2008), this vision exists as a series of commitments to deliver what are predominantly ‘contact’ based services, at force level, in a consistent way and to common minimum standards. The Pledge commitments align broadly with this strategy and both share common links with the Home Office National Quality of Service Commitment (2005) in terms of working towards a more citizen focused approach to policing that reflects the diverse needs and expectations of individuals and local communities.

The NCMS recognises that the relationship between expectation and outcomes is crucial both to understanding public satisfaction and providing insight as to how contact management services can best be designed and delivered. This approach aligns strongly with the ACPO/NPIA Citizen Focus Policing Hallmarks (2008), which require a service that “…maintains high levels of satisfaction and confidence through the consistent delivery of first class policing services that meet the needs of individuals and communities and provides a service that people value”.

The requirements for continued efficiencies and additional productivity in contact management are central both to Sir David Varney’s Service Transition Agreement (2007), which applies to publicly funded call centres, and the Home Office Efficiency and Productivity Strategy for the Police Service 2008-11. Both require forces to make the best use of resources to realise cashable improvements, more effective workforce deployment and the benefits of new technologies.
The NCMS recognises that effective contact management requires forces to use and develop IT systems and associated processes to provide better access, reduce inefficiencies and enable our people to deliver better services.

This fits well with a service developing a nationally coordinated approach to police information systems with the creation of the Information Systems Improvement Strategy (ISIS) and with plans for convergence of national IT infrastructure post 2015, including command and control, Airwave and mobile data systems that are key to improving contact management and improving public confidence.

The NCMS has a clear focus: To increase public confidence by creating accessible and responsive services that reflect the diverse needs of local communities whilst delivering efficiency and productivity gains for forces.

The Business Case for Change

This strategy has evolved as a result of recommendations from a number of thematic reports by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) and following a fundamental review of The National Call Handling Standards (NCHS) carried out by the NPIA National Contact Management Programme team.

The origins of this NCMS framework are traced back to HMIC thematic reports First Contact (2005) and Beyond the Call (2007). Recommendation 18 (Beyond the Call) states:

“The National Policing Improvement Agency should develop a National Contact Management Strategy, building on the National Call Handling Standards, First Contact, Beyond the Call and HMIC baseline assessments and covering all aspects of police contact management”

It is clear that in 2007 HMIC saw a continuing need for a national strategy covering all aspects of contact management, which would provide a vision for the Service and appropriate guidance and direction to forces. This would lead to improved quality of service delivery for customers and improved efficiency and productivity in the use of police resources.

In December 2007, ACPO Council approved the commission of work to develop a National Contact Management Strategy (NCMS). The business case identified that emerging thinking in government should be taken into account and set contact management within the context of the Citizen Focus agenda.
The NCMS delivers against this brief and supports the service by delivering HMIC’s recommendation to create a national strategy. The strategy itself does not deliver in depth tactical or operational guidance, i.e. the specific details of how to effectively approach delivery and/or measure activity. The detailed tactical and operational guidance will be contained within the National Contact Management Principals and Guidance document (NCMPG).

The NCMS recognises that the delivery of improvement at a local level is the responsibility of police authorities and forces. However, such local direction / guidance should be appropriately aligned to existing national standards.

The NCMS focus is clear: to establish a national vision for contact management, to align with NCMPG, to provide a framework to support and guide forces and to identify opportunities and solutions for effective local delivery.

Leading on from HMIC’s work a fundamental review of contact management has been carried out by the NPIA. This process, during 2008, involved: a detailed questionnaire completed by 45 forces to provide an assessment of the fitness for purpose of the National Call Handling Standards (NCHS); a national evaluation of the wider contact management environment involving 275 practitioners taking part in 28 workshops; an ACPO Contact Management Conference and an independently delivered National Police Contact Management Benchmarking Exercise.

The key messages in terms of the on-going development of the NCMS were:

i. Overwhelming support for the end-to-end approach to contact management (see model below) that breaks down silo working approaches and promotes efficiency of operation.

ii. It is fundamentally about delivering excellent customer service.

iii. The approach should be a process of evolution, not revolution, with realistic timescales for service adoption.

iv. The strategy should provide detail around the ‘what’ in terms of required change, but not the ‘how’, recognising that a ‘one size fits all’ approach doesn’t work and can inhibit successful local delivery.

v. Where the NCMS involves measurement and/or benchmarking there should be nationally agreed and defined terms.

vi. The NCMS should identify and promote effective practice, i.e. practice that enhances service delivery.

The NCMS promotes an ‘end-to-end’ view of service provision that takes account not only of the functional processes of contact management, e.g. call/contact handling and despatch and deployment but also incorporates the need for:

i. A clear understanding of customers’ needs and expectations at the first point of contact with the Service, and of how that experience of contact influences satisfaction and confidence in policing outcomes.

ii. A willingness to use customer feedback (positive and negative) about service provision to review and refine, where necessary, the structures and processes of contact management.

iii. Compliance with existing national standards, e.g., the Policing Pledge.

iv. Implementation of effective practice that will contribute to overall improvement in service provision, e.g. from programmes including QUEST (within NPIA capability support) and the ACPO citizen journey work.

v. Reduced bureaucracy, improved productivity and value for money efficiencies.
The strategic (end-to-end) service delivery model for contact management is shown below.

Central to improving contact management is having a clear understanding of its elements and activities, how they fit together and the interdependencies that are critical to success. The strategy document does not provide this level of detail, which can be found within the National Contact Management Principles and Guidance (NCMPG) document.

The NCMS Strategy Framework (page 9) shows that the NCMS, the strategy map and the underpinning NCMPG document are inter-related. This relationship is explained in more detail in section 1 – Principles and Critical Success Factors. The key point to note is that the three documents should be used together to assist in improving contact management service delivery.
The NCMS Strategy Framework

The NCMS Strategy (NCMS)

The high level strategy and vision for contact management in the 21st century.

It identifies 8 broad principles to support improvement in the design and delivery of contact management at a force level.

National Contact Management Strategy Map

Shows how the NCMS principles align to deliver business outputs and benefit outcomes in order to achieve the NCMS vision.

National Contact Management Principles and Guidance (NCMPG)

Identifies a series of critical success factors (CSFs), linked to the NCMS principles, which provide the detailed tactical and operational guidance that underpin NCMS.

It focuses on the activities/outcomes that matter in order to deliver the NCMS vision and goals.
1. Principles and Critical Success Factors

1.1 The NCMS identifies eight strategic principles for successful delivery of contact management:

Principle 1: **Customer**: designing and delivering contact management on the basis of citizen and business needs to increase customer satisfaction and public confidence.

Principle 2: **Leadership**: delivering effective leadership at all levels to promote and enhance citizen focused contact management.

Principle 3: **People**: investing in people and involving them in shaping contact management.

Principle 4: **Finance**: providing value for money by ensuring the optimum balance is achieved between the cost of service and delivering an excellent customer experience.

Principle 5: **Knowledge**: exploiting the value of citizen and business knowledge to understand performance and improve local accountability.

Principle 6: **Demand**: understanding the demand profile and workflow across the organisation in order to optimise service delivery.

Principle 7: **Resources**: satisfying demand for contact through the most efficient and effective use of resources to deliver responsive local policing.

Principle 8: **Partners**: optimising resilience through effective planning and collaboration with partners to enhance contact management capability.

1.2 Each principle is linked to an underlying group of critical success factors (CSFs), which describe the key processes or activities that should be carried out and/or measured, in order to deliver against the intention stated in the principle. These can form the basis for forces to create an action plan to assist in delivering a local approach.

1.3 CSFs are not discussed in detail within the strategy; however, there are clear links between the CSFs, individual principles and business delivery outcomes. This relationship, for each principle, is shown in the following diagrams.
Diagrams: Principles and Critical Success Factors

**Principle: Customer**
Designing and delivering contact management on the basis of citizen and business needs to increase customer satisfaction and public confidence.

**Critical Success Factors include:**
- Using the Citizen Focus Policing Hallmarks as an integral part of understanding business planning and change.
- Having a strategy for engaging, consulting and involving the customer in designing our service delivery.
- Having a force channel strategy that outlines choices and contact methods and supports the needs of local communities.
- Being able to demonstrate how service users will be kept informed on progress and outcomes relating to them.

Additional Critical Success Factors and other guidance can be found in the National Contact Management Principles and Guidance (NCMPG) document

**Principle: Leadership**
Delivering effective leadership at all levels to promote and enhance citizen focused contact management.

**Critical Success Factors include:**
- Having in place identified Chief Officer and Police Authority leads for contact management.
- Being able to demonstrate how frontline leaders support their staff to deliver citizen focused outcomes.
- Having structures in place to support joined-up decision making and joint accountability, at all levels, to support effective service delivery.
- Being able to evidence a process for engaging staff at all levels, to improve contact management service delivery.

Additional Critical Success Factors and other guidance can be found in the National Contact Management Principles and Guidance (NCMPG) document

**Principle: People**
Investing in people and involving them in shaping contact management.

**Critical Success Factors include:**
- Having an HR strategy for contact management that supports existing force HR and contact management strategies.
- Being able to evidence a process for engaging staff, at all levels to improve contact management service delivery.
- Empowering staff to use their professional judgment and skills to effectively resolve calls for service from the public.
- Having a recognised accreditation process that supports effective development of people talent in line with organisational ambitions and to support improved performance.

Additional Critical Success Factors and other guidance can be found in the National Contact Management Principles and Guidance (NCMPG) document

**Principle: Finance**
Providing value for money by ensuring the optimum balance is achieved between the cost of service and delivering an excellent customer experience.

**Critical Success Factors include:**
- Creating a culture that champions the customer and recognises success, removing or reducing waste in order to add value.
- Considering collaborative procurement opportunities when optimising and developing the service delivery function.
- Achieving the balance between cost and service delivery
- Understanding contact management functionality, scope, performance and cost when comparing with other organisations and most similar forces

Additional Critical Success Factors and other guidance can be found in the National Contact Management Principles and Guidance (NCMPG) document
Principle: Knowledge
Exploiting the value of citizen and business knowledge to understand performance and improve local accountability.

Critical Success Factors include:
- Providing effective leadership to ensure that knowledge and information contributes to organisational success and management of risk.
- Working towards MoPI compliance will assist forces to achieve accurate, relevant and accessible information.
- Having a knowledge management strategy that is underpinned by appropriate policies and processes.
- Ensuring that knowledge management is embedded into contact management and force learning programmes.

Additional Critical Success Factors and other guidance can be found in the National Contact Management Principles and Guidance (NCMPG) document.

Principle: Demand
Understanding the demand profile and workflow across the organisation, in order to optimise service delivery.

Critical Success Factors include:
- Creating an environment where planning / forecasting optimises resources and is used across the organisation to effectively manage demand.
- Having a single process owner for demand to support cross-functional working and provide final decision making.
- Showing evidence of understanding customer contact demand to determine where changes are required across the organisation.

Additional Critical Success Factors and other guidance can be found in the National Contact Management Principles and Guidance (NCMPG) document.

Principle: Resources
Satisfying demand for contact through the most efficient and effective use of resources to deliver responsive local policing.

Critical Success Factors include:
- Having joint accountability for service delivery across the organisation in order to deliver the best possible customer experience.
- Using the national contact grades as a framework to prioritise and standardise the response to calls for service.
- Scheduling appointments with callers at a time and place that is convenient to them.
- Ensuring that BCU commanders and supervisors are held accountable for patrol availability and response.

Additional Critical Success Factors and other guidance can be found in the National Contact Management Principles and Guidance (NCMPG) document.

Principle: Partners
Optimising resilience through effective planning and collaboration with partners, to enhance contact management capability.

Critical Success Factors include:
- Having Chief Officer support for a partnership approach to service delivery improvement.
- Having processes in place to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of working with partners in order to identify opportunities for continual improvement.
- Having commitment to implement regional or nationally developed systems, processes or procedures that support improved collaborative working and service delivery.

Additional Critical Success Factors and other guidance can be found in the National Contact Management Principles and Guidance (NCMPG) document.
2. NCMS – Strategy map

2.1 The strategy map at the end of this section provides a one page visual representation of the NCMS. It is a summary schematic and provides an holistic view of how the contact management principles, and desired business drivers and enabler outputs, combine to deliver the NCMS vision for the 21st century.

2.2 The financial and customer perspectives (the ‘business drivers’) describe what outcomes the service wants to achieve. The objectives identified in the processes, people (learning and growth) and leadership perspectives (the ‘enablers’) describe how the organisation intends to achieve these outcomes.

2.3 For ease of presentation the strategy map does not separately refer to each of the eight contact management principles; however, the outputs that are critical to the achievement of the NCMS vision, across all principles, are shown in the schematic.

2.4 The strategy map is a communication tool that enables staff to understand the NCMS and to translate it into actions they can undertake to help the organisation to succeed. It can be used to gain understanding of, and commitment to, the strategic approach.

2.5 The strategy map provides an overview of the linkages and dependencies between the contact management principles and identifies a series of key benefit outcomes (see blue arrows on the diagram) required to achieve the organisation’s mission and ultimately deliver the NCMS vision.

2.6 It is expected that forces will use both the NCMS and NCMPG as part of a process to create, or review an existing, force level contact management strategy (or series of strategies/policies). The resulting gap analysis will enable a force to develop and deliver its approach to contact management against the NCMS vision, and realise the associated benefits.

2.7 HMIC has been consulted in the development of both the NCMS and the NCMPG and supports the clear linkages between underlying principles, CSFs and diagnostic indicators.

2.8 The Association of Police Authorities (APA) has produced guidance to ensure that police authorities monitor and scrutinise implementation of the NCMS at a force level. It emphasises the need for a process of review and provides prompts around the principles and CSFs to ensure that authority members enable adequate oversight and scrutiny to occur.

2.9 This strategy compliments the following standards/codes of practices all of which have at their core a citizen focus or strong service delivery improvement emphasis:

   i. The Policing Pledge
   ii. The National Quality of Service Commitment
   iii. The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime
   iv. The Witness Charter
   v. The National Crime Recording Standard
   vi. The National Standard for Incident Recording

2.10 Consistent standards and improvements introduced in victim and witness care and call handling have led to marked improvements in service delivery that are reflected in increased levels of public confidence and service user satisfaction. The effective implementation of the principles outlined within the NCMS will support forces to achieve the key aims and objectives of these core-policing doctrines.
NCMS Strategy Map: Shows how the contact management driver and enabler outputs provide connectivity (↑) to achieve the NCMS vision.
3. Delivering Strategic and Local Benefits

3.1 The NCMS recognises that Citizen Focus Hallmarks are a critical first step to systematising the quality of service delivery across the whole system of policing. Although forces will be starting from different baselines the NCMS approach ensures that critical business enablers and drivers are focused to deliver key benefits and outcomes.

3.2 Using the principles and supporting guidance (within NCMPG) forces will be able to achieve the NCMS vision and realise many of the following benefits:

i. Improved trust and confidence in local service delivery.

ii. Increased customer satisfaction with service provision.

iii. Reduced inefficiency/bureaucracy associated with service delivery.

iv. Increased public engagement in the setting of both strategic and operational policing focus.

v. Improved accessibility to services for customers.

vi. Better prioritisation of and response to threat, risk and vulnerability.

vii. Creation of a more citizen focused service delivery culture.

viii. Improved accountability for service delivery.

ix. Better use of organisational resources.

tax. Value for money resulting from increased collaborative working and procurement improvements.

xi. Pro-active leadership of business change and improvement.

xii. Improved staff involvement in the design and delivery of service.

xiii. Confident and motivated staff - equipped and empowered to deliver local services that meet local needs.
Further Information

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