

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD HELPLINE

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CITY SERVICES

1. Purpose of Report

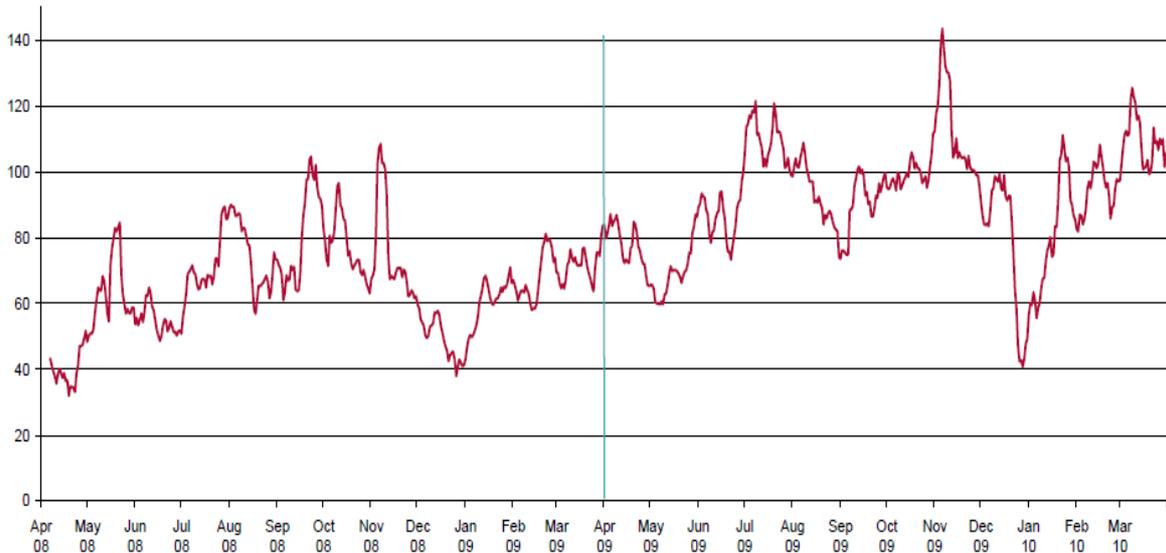
- 1.1 To provide an overview to the Scrutiny Committee of the work of the Neighbourhood Helpline
- 1.2 The report will contribute to the Committee's study into alcohol related violence in the City Centre.

2. Background

- 2.1 In June 2006, the Northumbria Partnership launched a Home Office funded initiative, the 101 Non Emergency Helpline. Sunderland was one of 14 partners involved in the initiative along with other Local Authorities and the Police.
- 2.2 In March 2008, the Home Office withdrew the funding for the initiative. Two of the partners, Sunderland and Newcastle decided to continue what had become, a very successful Helpline.
- 2.3 On 1st April 2008, a new 'It's your Service Partnership' was formed and the 101 service transitioned into the 'Neighbourhood Helpline'. The Helpline is delivered in partnership by Sunderland and Newcastle City Councils.

3. Call Volumes and Capacity

- 3.1 The Neighbourhood Helpline operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year with Customer Service Advocates trained to handle a range of enquiries and requests for service.
- 3.2 During the last financial year 2009/10, there were a total of 33,564 calls to the Helpline, an average of 92 calls per day. As the chart below shows, volumes have continued to climb over the two years of operation, albeit with expected seasonal drops in demand.



3.3 A breakdown of service request types is listed below with rubbish and litter being the most popular issue raised;

Drunk or Rowdy in Public Places	104
Environmental Issues	226
Intimidation and Harassment	184
Licensing breaches	27
Noise nuisance	1515
Rubbish or Litter	16620
Stray Dogs	171
Street Lighting	1502
Vandalised, damaged or in need of repair	4378
Vehicles and Parking	52

3.4 All requests for service are logged immediately onto the Customer Contact System and referred to Service Delivery Teams within relevant Departments.

For example, all Anti Social Behaviour related requests are referred to the Neighbourhood Relations Team. Anti Social Behaviour Officers respond to the requests and determine the most appropriate course of action.

- 3.5 Reports are also produced directly from the system with data utilised to inform specific courses of action. For example, the Assistant Head of Streetscene takes relevant data along to the Responsible Authority Group, a multi-disciplinary team of officers who discuss issues of mutual concern relating to licensed premises.
- 3.6 For the period in question Helpline Advisors also signposted customers to appropriate agencies as follows;

Northumbria Police	205
Sunderland City Council	15
AA	14
Gateshead Council	13
Newcastle City Council	13
Northumbrian Water	9
Sunderland Housing Group	9
Northumbria Police Authority	8
RSPCA	8
Ask the Police	7
Hartlepool Borough Council	7
North Tyneside	7
Durham Council	4
Electricity	4
NEXUS	4
Other	16

4. Quality of Service

4.1 Quantitative call handling performance at Sunderland is very good with;

- 92.9% of calls answered and;
- 87.4% of those calls answered within 60 seconds

4.2 In addition, a sample of all calls are quality checked for accuracy and quality of service delivery. Again, sample checks in the main return high levels of compliance.

5. Successes and Future Opportunities

5.1 The Neighbourhood Helpline is a very popular service with residents with high levels of customer satisfaction.

5.2 The arrangement allows for the direct dial into emergency services if required to ensure the appropriate level of response is provided, especially during unsociable hours.

5.3 Valuable customer intelligence is gained and is being used to inform service delivery and local responsive services.

5.4 The Neighbourhood Helpline is an excellent example of a front office shared service and demonstrates a robust partnership between Sunderland and Newcastle City Council's. As calls are answered for and on behalf of each local authority, business continuity and resilience is an integral part of the service provision.

5.5 The Partnership is easily scalable and provides the opportunity to expand to other similar service providers and / or out of hour's services in the future.

6. Recommendation

6.1 Members are asked to note and comment upon the report.

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