



Public Counter Service Review

E Division – Edinburgh

Public Briefing Paper

Version 1

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Purpose

The purpose of this briefing paper is to provide information on the proposals for Public Counter Service Provision within Divisions across Scotland. The review seeks to provide a consistency of service across Scotland with accessible public counters, focusing police officers in communities while recognising the current financial challenges facing Police Scotland.

Overview

Edinburgh Division

The divisional headquarters is St. Leonard's Police Station in central Edinburgh where the Local Police Commander, four functional Superintendents and a Detective Superintendent are located. The station also houses the divisional Custody Centre.

Edinburgh Division covers a large geographic area from Leith in the north of the city to the Pentlands in the south, with a resident population of around 486,000.

The Division has aligned with the respective local councils with each having a dedicated Area Commander who has the responsibility for all day-to-day policing functions.

There are currently 14 police stations within the division (inclusive of the Police Information Centre) that provide a public counter service.

Statistical Analysis

Method

A public counter demand survey has been completed recently at police stations where staffed public counter provision currently exists.

A public counter log was created to capture key data relating to visitors attending at the stations. A nominated officer within each station was given responsibility for ensuring the logs were accurate and reflected all visits. The nominated officers were required to certify this on a daily basis.

In addition, it should be noted that the ability to draw significant and accurate conclusions is qualified by the accuracy of the returns submitted given the potential for over or under-recording. Entering a demand which is a sub process of another such as a person reporting a crime and then generating a STORM¹ job would be an example of over recording. However, as the circumstances were the same for all staff, it was deemed to be a reasonable method of data collection.

¹ System for Tasking and Operational Resource Management – command and control software package used to log and manage all police incidents and resources

The resulting demand analysis was designed to provide a snapshot of demand on the public counter service and to inform the service of the pattern of timing, frequency and reasons for public visits to the station and compare this with police officer demand on counter staff. There are several policing processes that can only be completed with face to face interaction at a police station. The analysis compared, where possible, the frequency and volume of these functions against other enquiry types and the demand on counter staff for back office support to police officers.

Data Capture

There were 10,779 submissions from the police stations within the division all captured over a two week period. A breakdown of the demand data was carried out at those stations where it was proposed that there would be a significant alteration to the opening hours of the front counter. The types of demands were analysed to assess which are essential front counter services provided to the public, taking into account the range of alternative contact methods available.

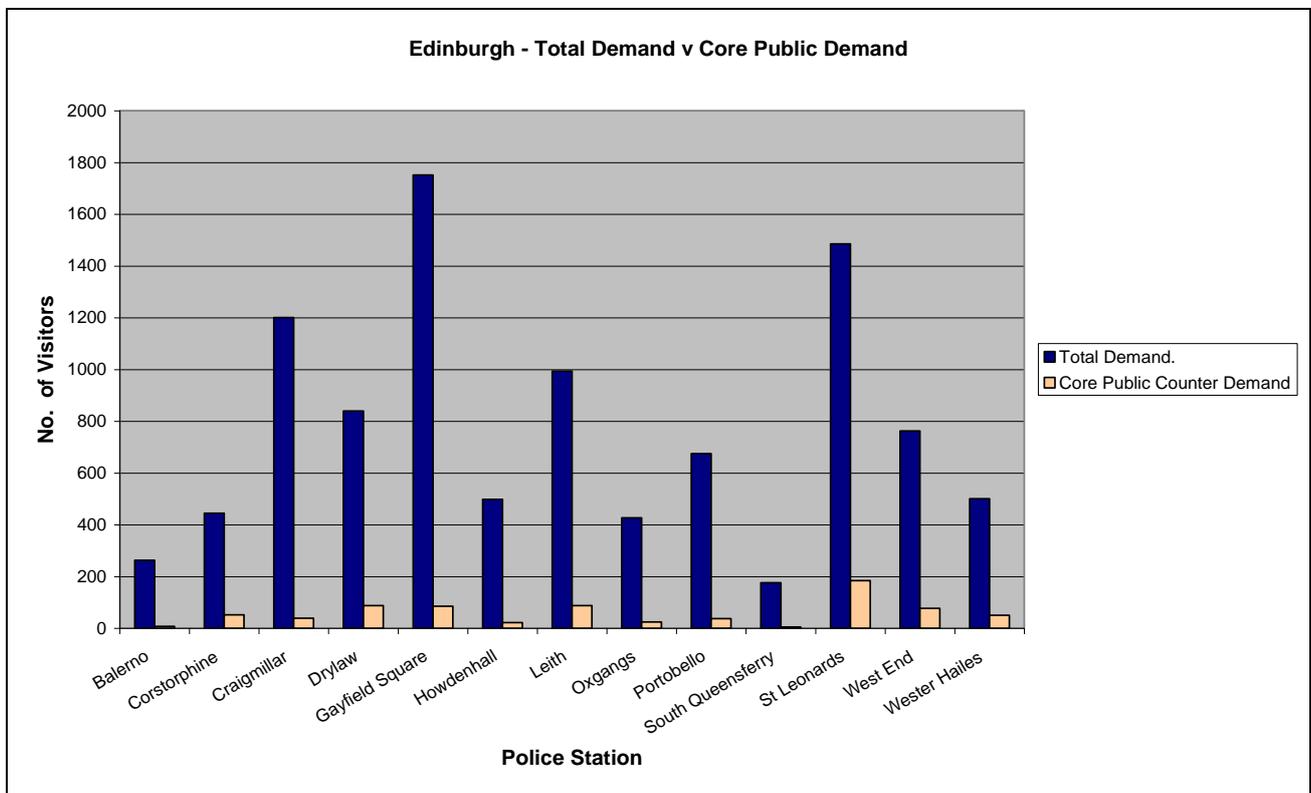


Figure 1: Demand made of public counter staff over a 2 week activity analysis exercise. NB. The number of days/hours for data capture varied between police stations as highlighted in the synopsis for each.

In order to define core public demand as referenced throughout the report, the types of demand were broken down and categorised as either ancillary or core public counter demands (see Appendix A). This in turn reduced the data down to show only the very specific front counter demand which provides a true picture of the necessary public use of a police station.

Figure 2 overleaf shows that 1 demand in 12 related to a core demand.

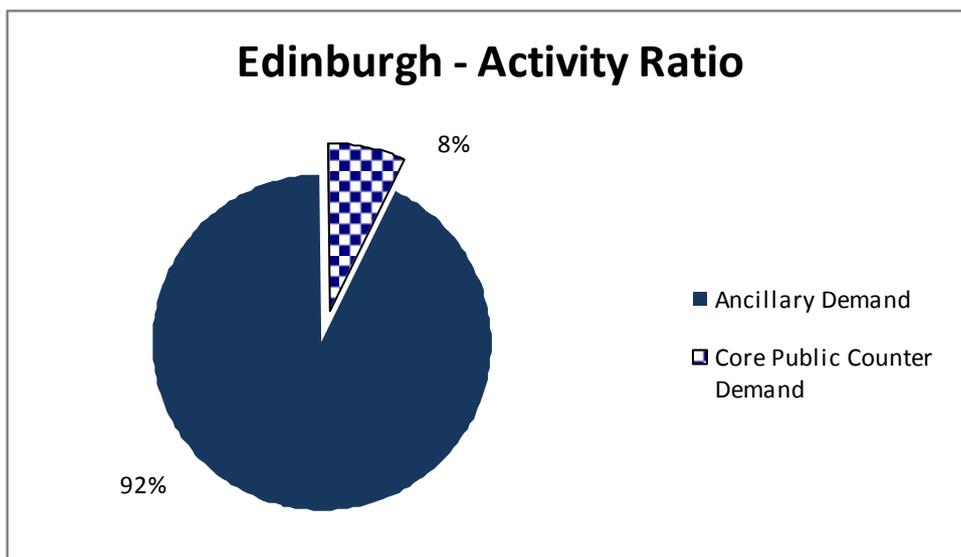


Figure 2: Percentage of public counter demands across all E Division stations.

Rationale for Proposed Structure

The following provides some of the key findings in relation to those stations within the Edinburgh area where it is proposed that the public counter facility is reduced.

Key to the analysis was to establish the purpose of the visit to a police station, and to quantify the demand for services requiring face to face interaction at various times throughout the day.

In each of the stations where demand analysis was carried out, the police demand for admin/clerical services far outweighed the percentage of public demand for the services.

Although certain functions carried out at public counters (e.g. immigration/bail/sex offender requirements, HO/RT - Home Office/Road Traffic – refers to forms issued for the production and recording of driving documents matters etc) require physical interaction with the public, the demand analysis showed that many of the demands made, particularly during the hours where there is a proposed reduction in public counter provision, related to non policing matters e.g. directions, civil matters etc.

To achieve a consistent model across Scotland, defined categories of station opening hours have been developed which are based on work undertaken in the former Strathclyde and Grampian force areas.

Category	A	B	C	D	E
Hours	24/7	0700-0000 hrs 7 days per week	0800-1800hrs 7 days per week	0900-1700hrs Monday to Friday	Shared service or No full time provision

It is recognised that a number of shared services have been developed over recent years. Police Scotland welcome this development and are keen to engage with local authorities, partner organisations in the public sector or third sector to further develop this concept and operational service delivery model. In addition some private enterprises have expressed

an interest in developing police drop in or surgery type functions that provide easy access on a regular basis to police facilities within their commercial environment. Police Scotland are keen to explore these opportunities and would welcome contact to local command teams in the relevant divisions or to the Review Team at publiccounterreview@scotland.pnn.police.uk

Divisional Proposals

The following provides a synopsis of the proposed outcomes for each station within the division and a rationale where a change of opening hours is recommended based on both footfall and professional knowledge:

Howdenhall

Howdenhall Police Station currently provides a public counter service between 0700 and midnight, 7 days per week. Over a 10 day period there was a total of 498 demands made of the station assistant and of this 22 demands could be classified as core public counter functions. This represented 4% of the total demand and averaged approximately 2 members of the public visiting each day for a core front counter purpose.

The proposal for Howdenhall is to be reclassified as a category C station i.e. 0800-1800hrs, 7 days per week.

Portobello

Portobello Police Station currently provides a public counter service between 0700 and midnight, 7 days per week. Over a 14 day period at Portobello police station there was a total of 675 demands made of the station assistant and of this 37 demands could be classified as core public counter functions. This represented 5% of the total demand and averaged less than 3 members of the public visiting each day for a core front counter purpose.

The proposal for Portobello is to be reclassified as a category C station i.e. 0800-1800hrs, 7 days per week.

West End

West End Police Station currently provides a public counter service between 0700 and midnight, 7 days per week. Over an 11 day period there was a total of 763 demands made of the station assistant and of this 77 demands could be classified as core public counter functions. This represented 10% of the total demand and averaged 7 members of the public visiting each day for a core front counter purpose. Analysis of station activity highlighted the fact that public demand is consistent throughout the day and diminishes out with normal working hours.

The proposal for West End police station is to be reclassified as a category D station i.e. 0900-1700hrs, Monday to Friday.

Craigmillar

Craigmillar Police Station currently provides a public counter service between 0700 and midnight, 7 days per week. Over an 14 day period there was a total of 1201 demands made of the station assistant and of this 39 demands could be classified as core public counter functions. This represented 3% of the total demand and averaged less than 3 members of the public visiting each day for a core front counter purpose.

The proposal for Craigmillar is to be reclassified as a category E station i.e. shared service as the South East Neighbourhood Hub.

Corstorphine

Corstorphine Police Station currently provides a public counter service between 0700 and midnight, 7 days per week. Over an 11 day period there was a total of 445 demands made of the station assistant and of this 52 demands could be classified as core public counter functions. This represented 12% of the total demand and averaged approximately 5 members of the public visiting each day for a core front counter purpose.

The proposal for Corstorphine is to be reclassified as a category E station i.e. shared service as the West Neighbourhood Hub.

Balerno

Balerno Police Station currently provides a public counter service between 0900 and 1700hrs, Monday to Friday. Over a 10 day period there was a total of 263 demands made of the station assistant and of this 7 demands could be classified as core public counter functions. This represented 3% of the total demand and averaged less than 1 member of the public visiting each day for a core front counter purpose. The footfall analysis highlights that there is little public demand at this police station.

The proposal for Balerno station is for it to have no public counter provision.

South Queensferry

South Queensferry Police Station currently provides a public counter service between 0900 and 1700hrs, Monday to Friday. Over a 5 day period there was a total of 176 demands made of the station assistant and of this 5 demands could be classified as core public counter functions. This represented 3% of the total demand and averaged 1 member of the public visiting each day for a core front counter purpose. The footfall analysis highlights that there is little public demand at this police station.

The proposal for South Queensferry station is for it to have no public counter provision.

Oxgangs

Oxgangs Police Station currently provides a public counter service between 0700 and midnight, 7 days per week. Over a 14 day period there was a total of 427 demands made of the station assistant and of this 24 demands could be classified as core public counter functions. This represented 6% of the total demand and averaged less than 2 members of the public visiting each day for a core front counter purpose.

The proposal for Oxgangs station is for it to have no public counter provision.

Local Factors and Considerations

- There is no change proposed to the opening hours of St Leonards, Gayfield Square, Wester Hailes, Leith and Drylaw police stations and as such the footfall at these stations is not highlighted in the report.
- Consideration has been given on how the proposed reduction or removal of counter provision may impact on counter service at other locations or area service centres. Although not specifically quantified, the demand levels involved are generally small and unlikely to impact on the proposed service provision.
- In formulating a proposal for public counters that will be consistent across Scotland, the review has taken into account the appropriate resource levels for staff for the demand from the public in each local area in addition to the variety of alternative contact/reporting methods now available.
- The footfall at the Public Information Centre is not highlighted in the report as the varying opening hours and seasonal demand would not be comparable with the data from other stations within the division. Seasonal opening hours at the Public Information Centre and South Queensferry have been proposed as an efficient use of resources. Each would require a single member of staff to deal with the increased demand during the summer months.

Proposed Structure

Police Station	Current Opening Hours	Proposed Option
St Leonards*	24 hours (7 days)	Category A 24 hours 7 days
Gayfield Square*	24 hours (7 days)	
Wester Hailes	0700-0000hrs (7 days)	Category B 0700-0000hrs 7 days
Drylaw	0700-0000hrs (7 days)	
Leith	0700-0000hrs (7 days)	
Howdenhall	0700-0000hrs (7 days)	Category C 0800-1800hrs 7 days
Portobello	0700-0000hrs (7 days)	
West End	0700-0000hrs (7 days)	Category D 0900-1700hrs Monday to Friday
Craigmillar (South east neighbourhood Hub)	0700-0000hrs (7 days)	Category E (Shared service)
Corstorphine (West neighbourhood Hub)	0700-0000hrs (7 days)	
		Category E (No full time provision)
Balerno	0900-1700hrs (Mon-Fri)	No public counter provision
Oxgangs	0700-0000hrs (7 days)	
Police Information Centre, High Street	Varied but open 7 days	
South Queensferry	0900-1700hrs (Mon-Fri)	
* - indicates Prescribed Station under The Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Prescribed Police Stations) (Scot) Regs 2008		

Demand Descriptors

The following list of descriptors was used to categorise the main functions carried out by station assistant/front counter staff. These were split into core public counter and ancillary categories and were applied where possible to the data gathered from any demand analysis carried out.

Core public counter demands were defined as those processes in general which require face-to-face interaction or which are subject to legal or procedural requirements that have to be completed at a police station.

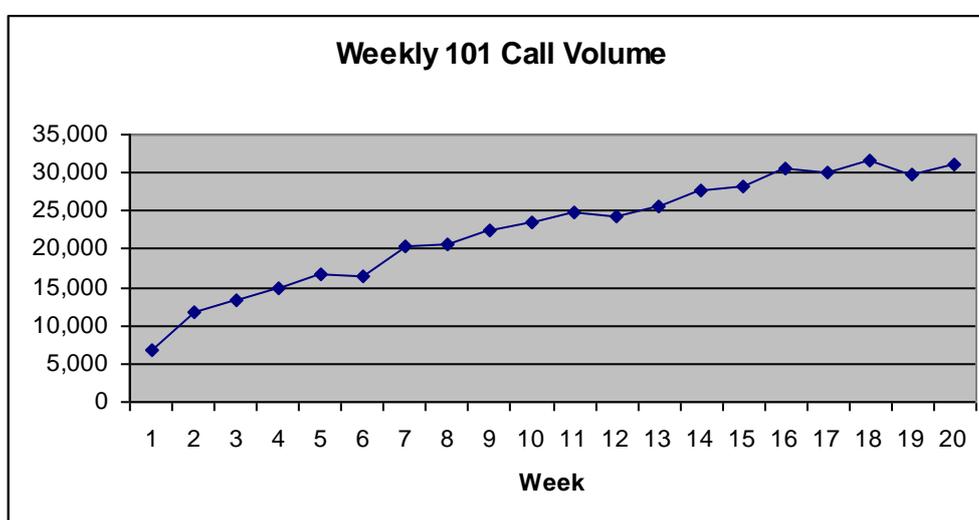
Ancillary demands were defined as all other functions that can be completed by other means or without the need for a visit to a police public counter.

Any custody related activity has been filtered out from public counter demands where possible.

Ancillary Demands	Core Public Counter Demands
Access to premises	
Admin duties	
Appointment	
	Bail (sign in/register)
CHS/PNC check	
Complaint against police	
Court admin	
Custody (property handed in)	
Custody enquiry	
	Data Protection/FOI requests
Delivery/Collection	
	Firearms (licensing/application/surrender)
	Found property (inc. dogs)
General enquiry (non-police matter)	
General enquiry (police matter)	
	HORT (check/record)
	Immigration (register/sign in)
Lost property (inc. dogs)	
	REGSO (register/sign in)
Report crime/vehicle accident	
Request for police officer	
STORM (create/update incident)	
	Vehicle seizure/S165 enquiry
Warrant/fine enquiry	
Warrant (surrender)	

Key Messages

1. Policing continues to face unprecedented financial challenges over the coming months and years with a significant reduction in budget and a requirement to find savings and provide best value for public services
2. Police Scotland has maximised resources into frontline policing and specialist policing resources, which has allowed the Force to maintain Police Officer numbers at the highest possible level and continue to provide visible, localised policing services across Scotland focused on keeping people safe.
3. The way in which the public contact the police has changed significantly with the number of people actually using public counters falling dramatically as other methods of contact have become more popular. A number of these alternative methods, which are representative of the needs of a modern society, allow Police Scotland to maximise the number of police officers on the street at any one time and therefore improve the safety and wellbeing of people, places and communities in Scotland.
4. The implementation of the single non-emergency number (101) will allow for changes to be made to call handling and service delivery across Scotland and will provide a consistency of service. Requests for police service will be provided with an appropriate police response ranging from telephone advice to local officer deployment. As shown by the graph below, the volume of calls to the 101 number has risen consistently since being introduced and for the week ending 7th July 2013 the 101 number accounted for 46.3% of non emergency calls made in Scotland.



Weekly increase in volume of 101 calls since it was introduced on 18/02/2013

5. Police Scotland use social media to circulate the latest news, events and information to the public via Twitter (@policescotland) and Facebook (www.facebook.com/policescotland).
6. Hate crime incidents and domestic abuse incidents can now be reported online via the official Police Scotland website, www.scotland.police.uk. or by visiting a third Party Reporting Centre.

7. In some areas police surgeries and diary appointments can be arranged and we will continue to utilise our mobile police stations, where available, for this purpose.
8. Information regarding crime can be passed to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or through an [Anonymous Online Form](#) - both of these routes are completely anonymous and available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
9. Changes to front counter services are designed to prioritise stations where there is a larger demand, work more effectively in partnership and potentially on partners' premises and meet community needs in a more cost efficient manner.
10. Any changes to public counter opening hours will be publicised in order to keep the local communities fully informed.
11. Although most police station public counters will be closed overnight, local officers will still be working out of the stations and actively patrolling communities. Members of the public are asked to make routine enquiries during reception open hours. Officers will be available 24/7 if they are required. An analogy is a doctor's surgery – The doctor's surgery may only be open for certain hours, but you can always access medical advice, a doctor or nurse, or emergency care, 24/7, if needed. Well trained and well equipped officers will continue to work closely with local communities and allow the force to maintain current levels of visibility and engagement.
12. Police Scotland remains committed to a community model of policing which understands the needs of its communities across the country and seeks to maintain the highest levels of frontline policing, and give the best possible service within the available funding. Our review is on the basis that officers will not routinely backfill public counter positions.
13. The service remains committed to there being no compulsory redundancies and any reduction in staff numbers will be through voluntary redundancy and early retirement which will be achieved through full consultation with staff and union representatives.
14. While there might be a reduction in the number of public counters this does not mean that police stations will close. Police officers will continue to work within these communities and keep people safe.

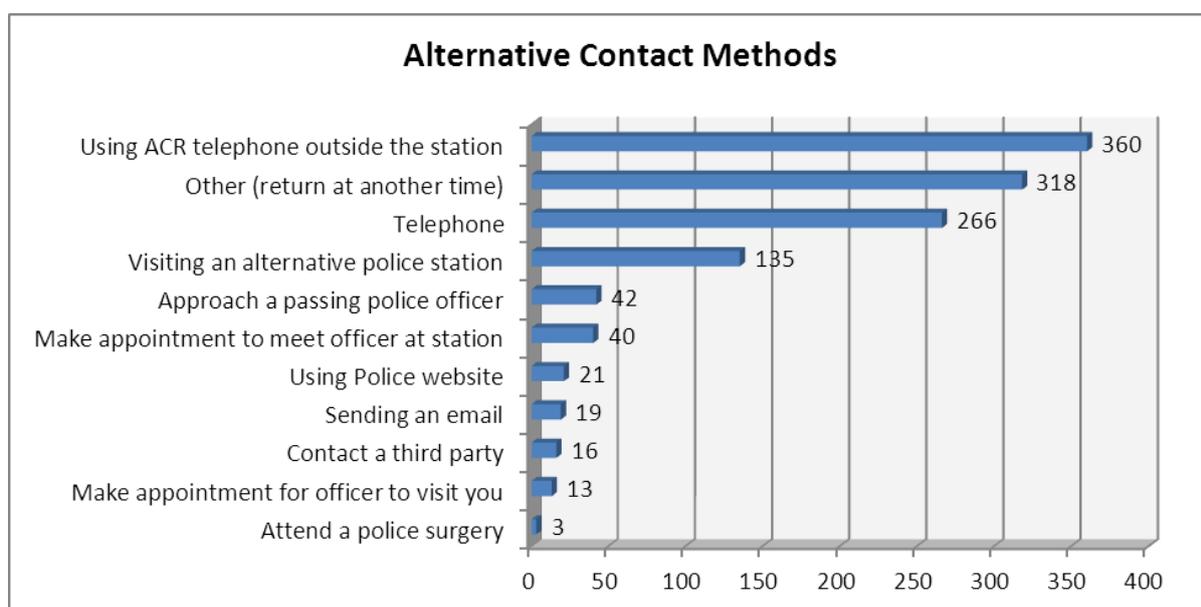
Alternative Contact Methods

Survey Results

As part of the public counter survey carried out in 2011 by Lothian and Borders Police, a total of 1233 callers to the public counter were asked:

“If this police station had not been open when you arrived, which of the following would you have considered as an alternative method to contact the police?”

The table below shows the total figures for the separate surveys carried out at stations in the Lothians and Scottish Borders area (excl Edinburgh).



The majority of those who answered “other” indicated they would make a return visit to the same station at another time.

While this is the second most popular response, an online survey carried out by Lothian and Borders Police around the same time found that of 354 responses, only 8% (25) expressed a preference to report a crime at a police station, 4% (12) would prefer to report a disturbance/nuisance and 3% (11) would prefer to report a road accident at a police station. The results of the survey are reinforced by a separate analysis of crime reporting within the legacy Lothian and Borders area which confirmed the following percentages of crime reported at police stations compared to other methods: (2008/09 – 9.6%, 2009/10 – 8.3%, 2010/11 – 8.9%, 2011/12 – 9.1%).

The counter survey in general, indicated a willingness by the public to use alternative methods of contact with the police when the counter is not available. However, in some instances the results suggested a lack of awareness of the various methods available. Since this survey was undertaken, clear guidance for emergency and non-emergency matters have been developed and published.