



# Responding to the call

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**101 and 999 Contact Officer / Radio Operator**



**It's not an everyday job**

# Be part of one of the most efficient and best performing Forces in the country

Dorset covers 1,024 square miles, has a resident population of 742,000 and attracts 14.3m overnight stays by visitors each year. It's a busy place but has one of the lowest recorded crime rates in the country and the Force Command Centre is key to keeping it that way. From the Force Command Centre based in our Headquarters at Winfrith, teams of 101 and 999 call takers and radio operators answer calls and co-ordinate police resources across the whole of Dorset, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. From the conurbation of Bournemouth and Poole in the east of the county to the rural west, Dorset throws unusual, difficult, yet fascinating situations at our staff every day. Joining us means learning to expect anything.

## Answering calls

The Force Command Centre receives both emergency 999 calls and non-emergency 101 calls. Answering 999 calls is not always a matter of life and death. However, the way you listen and interpret the call can make a vital difference. Of the 290,000 or so calls received each year, on average just under 30 per cent are received via 999. Every call we receive is important; there is no 'average' call. Each caller is treated equally and each situation is taken on its own merits.

All calls are assessed against the [National Call Handling Standards](#) (NCHS). When a 999 call is received it is graded and passed to a radio operator in the dispatch team who assesses the resources required and tasks police officers to the incident. Such incidents can include a burglary in progress, a serious Road Traffic Collision (RTC) on a major route through the county, or a lost child on a busy beach.

A 101 call requires a less immediate response and will not normally require immediate deployment of police resources. It is crucial to remember these calls are still important, particularly to the caller, and may involve incidents which have already occurred such as theft, concerns for welfare, and simply reporting the unusual.

## The difference between call handling and dispatch

The Force Command Centre is separated into two areas: call handling (Non-emergency Contact Officer) and dispatch (101/999 Contact Officer/Radio Operators). A team of over 30 members of staff are normally on duty in the Force Command Centre at any one time.

Contact Officers receive 999 and 101 calls from people of all backgrounds and nationalities. It is their responsibility to gather the right information, often under difficult circumstances, to enable the radio operators to task the appropriate police resources. Asking the right questions, listening, and relaying accurate details at the same time is critical when every second is precious. It is not always easy. The caller may speak little English or be too distressed to communicate clearly. There are times when third party support is needed – like the Ambulance or Fire services. Caller details are then entered on the computerised Command and Control

system, and depending on the grading of the call, the 101 and 999 Contact Officer/Radio Operators take over.

In dispatch, 101/999 Contact Officer/Radio Operators work in teams and are each responsible for their own particular area of Dorset. They pass details of the call to the appropriate police team by Airwave Radio and will remain in touch with the deployed teams for the duration of the incident. 101/999 Contact Officer/Radio Operators make decisions on how many and which police officers to send to which incidents and are constantly balancing the demand for police officers against the number of incidents they are managing.

They are assisted by support operators who are also trained 101/999 Contact Officer/Radio Operators and who liaise with other emergency services, keep victims updated and communicate with police officers at the incident.

### **Training and why it's so important**

You can expect sustained learning and assessment during your first year so you should be aware of the high levels of effort and commitment involved. If you have any leave booked during the initial course and mentoring period, you will be required to cancel that leave. If this is not possible, you will join the next available course.

During initial training we will require successful candidates to work full time for the period of training delivery, which will be for approximately 16 to 18 weeks. This is owing to the level of training required in order to provide successful candidates with the skills to start the role. During the training period we are not able to grant any leave.

The first five weeks of your training will focus on policies, procedures and the law, and some call taking and will be mainly classroom based. You will then move to a live call handling environment, supported and supervised by mentors. You will work within your contracted shift pattern, although the actual shifts worked may be altered to allow for the most beneficial learning. You will maintain a professional portfolio throughout your training period and will be assessed regularly to ensure you have the support you need to develop your skills effectively.

Following the opportunity to experience a wide variety of calls and to develop your skills, and subject to successful completion of your portfolio, you will be deemed competent in call handling. You will then be ready to undertake radio operator training which will be carried out within your team under instruction from a mentor from within the dispatch function. There is likely to be a wait until a mentor is available during which time you will continue to develop your call handling skills.

You will work with a mentor to develop radio operator skills and will continue to be supported and assessed during this period, updating your professional portfolio until you are ready to complete your final assessment and go solo. Some people take longer than others to feel comfortable working on their own and we won't pressurise you to do this before you are ready. This is why the probationary period for 101/999 Contact Officer/Radio Operator is 12 months. You will continue to be assessed on the quality of your work on a regular basis throughout your

professional career and provided with further regular training to ensure that we continue to provide the best possible service to the people of Dorset.

Why is the training so extensive? Because it needs to be. You are the first contact with the public in times of crisis; the first responder, the first vital link. You must be able to cope with anything; from an elderly lady who doesn't want to be in her residential care home, to a member of the public who is being attacked. The decisions you make in those crucial seconds – and the instructions you give – can be life changing. This is why training is so important.

For any further queries about the role please email:  
[Force-Command-Recruitment@Dorset.PNN.Police.uk](mailto:Force-Command-Recruitment@Dorset.PNN.Police.uk)

## **Hours**

We offer a rolling full time (37 hours) shift pattern, or two preferred flexible working options at 18.5 hours or 24.67 hours, which cover 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Ideally, you will need to remain full time until such time as you achieve competence in each of the three skill areas. However, if radio dispatch training is significantly delayed, consideration will be given to reduction of hours once competent in 101 and 999 call taking which is likely to take around four to five months.

As an emergency service the role requires shift working including some unsociable hours, weekend, and public holiday working for which enhanced rates of pay are applied. As the post holder will be working a 24 hour rotating shift pattern (regardless if full or part time), any other employment held must be approved as compatible with the shift pattern. Staff will be required to work such bank holidays as they fall within their shifts for which additional enhancements will be paid.

## **Pay**

Commencing salary will be within Scale D which is **£24,742** per annum pro rata, rising by yearly increments to **£27,399** per annum pro rata. Salary is inclusive of 20% shift allowance. An enhancement can also be claimed for hours worked at weekend which accumulates to approximately £2,000 per annum pro rata.

## **Location**

This post is based at Force Headquarters, Winfrith near Wool in Dorset. The initial training is generally held at Winfrith. For operational reasons, we may occasionally need to base the training elsewhere in the Force. On these rare occasions, you will be notified at the Assessment Centre.

## **Tenure**

This post is subject to a two year tenure period during which staff are precluded from applying for other roles or secondments within the Force.



## **Holiday entitlements**

Dorset Police annual leave entitlements for a 101/999 Contact Officer/Radio Operator is 23 days (170.20 hours). Leave is currently recorded and booked in hours and minutes (excluding lunch breaks) for all staff.

An additional five days leave is granted following the fifth year anniversary of any appointment (pro-rata for the year of the anniversary) therefore the leave entitlement will increase to 28 days (207.20 hours) in the following leave year.

## **Additional information**

As an operational policing environment, training plans and other activity will sometimes be subject to amendment for operational reasons.

## **Other benefits**

Dorset Police endeavours to offer proactive support to maximise a healthy work/life balance. Staff are therefore offered a wide range of provisions to assist creating a healthy work/life balance including:

- Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Leave
- Flexible Working Policy: e.g. opportunity to request Job sharing, part time working.
- Shift working
- Extended Leave Break Policy

Police staff have access to a Contributory Pension Scheme.

## **Fitness**

Fitness and gym facilities are available at various locations across the Force including Force Headquarters. Trained staff are available to offer advice and assistance to police staff regarding fitness programmes and use of specialist equipment.

## **Support Networks**

The Force has a number of support networks for its staff, including Dorset Action for Women Network (DAWN), Parent Network Support Group, Disability Support Network, Neurodiversity Support Network, Lesbian and Gay Liaison Officers (LAGLO), LGBT+ Support Network, Force Chaplaincy and the Minority Ethnic Police Association (MEPA).

## Example 24/7 Shift Pattern – Full Time 37 Hours

Please note this is the basic Rest Day pattern and start & finish times within the pattern may vary.

tue	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun	mon	tue	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun	mon
0700-1600	0700-1600	1530-0030	1700-0300	2200-0700	2200-0700	RD	RD	RD	TRNG	0700-1700	0700-1700	1530-0030	1530-0030
9	9	9	10	9	9				8	10	10	9	9
tue	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun	mon	tue	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun	mon
2200-0700	2200-0700	RD	RD	RD	RD	0700-1600	0700-1600	1530-0030	1530-0030	2200-0700	2200-0700	RD	RD
9	9					9	9	9	9	9	9		
tue	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun	mon	tue	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun	mon
RD	RD	0700-1600	0700-1700	1700-0300	1530-0030	2200-0700	2200-0700	RD	RD	RD	RD	0700-1600	0700-1600
		9	10	10	9	9	9					9	9
tue	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun	mon	tue	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun	mon
1530-0030	1530-0030	2200-0700	2200-0700	RD	RD	RD	RD	0700-1600	0700-1600	1700-0300	1700-0300	2200-0700	2200-0700
9	9	9	9					9	9	10	10	9	9
tue	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun	mon	tue	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun	mon
RD	RD	RD	RD	0700-1700	0700-1600	1530-0030	1530-0030	2200-0700	2200-0700	RD	RD	RD	RD
				10	9	9	9	9	9				

RD – Rest Day  
TRNG – Training

## Example 24/7 Shift Pattern – 24.67hrs (4 out of 6 Shifts)

Please note this is the basic Rest Day pattern and start & finish times within the pattern may vary.

tue	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun	mon	tue	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun	mon
0700-1600	0700-1600	1530-0030	1700-0300	RD	RD	RD	RD	RD	TRNG	RD	RD	1530-0030	1530-0030
9	9	9	10						8			9	9
tue	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun	mon	tue	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun	mon
2200-0700	2200-0700	RD	RD	RD	RD	0700-1600	0700-1600	RD	RD	2200-0700	2200-0700	RD	RD
9	9					9	9			9	9		
tue	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun	mon	tue	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun	mon
RD	RD	0700-1600	0700-1700	1700-0300	1530-0030	RD	RD	RD	RD	RD	RD	RD	RD
		9	10	10	9								
tue	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun	mon	tue	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun	mon
1530-0030	1530-0030	2200-0700	2200-0700	RD	RD	RD	RD	0700-1600	0700-1600	RD	RD	2200-0700	2200-0700
9	9	9	9					9	9			9	9
tue	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun	mon	tue	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun	mon
RD	RD	RD	RD	0700-1700	0700-1600	1530-0030	1530-0030	RD	RD	RD	RD	RD	RD
				10	9	9	9						

RD – Rest Day  
TRNG – Training

## Example 24/7 Shift Pattern – 18.5 hours, (3 out of 6 Shifts)

Please note this is the basic Rest Day pattern and start & finish times within the pattern may vary.

tue	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun	mon	tue	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun	mon
0700-1600	0700-1600	1530-0030	RD	RD	RD	RD	RD	RD	TRNG	RD	RD	RD	1530-0030
9	9	9							8				9
tue	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun	mon	tue	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun	mon
2200-0700	2200-0700	RD	RD	RD	RD	0700-1600	0700-1600	1530-0030	RD	RD	RD	RD	RD
9	9					9	9	9					
tue	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun	mon	tue	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun	mon
RD	RD	RD	RD	RD	1530-0030	2200-0700	2200-0700	RD	RD	RD	RD	0700-1600	0700-1600
					9	9	9					9	9
tue	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun	mon	tue	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun	mon
1530-0030	RD	RD	RD	RD	RD	RD	RD	RD	RD	RD	1700-0300	2200-0700	2200-0700
9											10	9	9
tue	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun	mon	tue	wed	thurs	fri	sat	sun	mon
RD	RD	RD	RD	0700-1700	0700-1600	1530-0030	RD	RD	RD	RD	RD	RD	RD
				10	9	9							

RD – Rest Day  
TRNG – Training

## Recruitment Schedule and Application Process

Provided below is a simple schedule reflecting the key stages of the 101 and 999 Contact Officer/Radio Operators recruitment process.

Shortlisting and competency-based marking
Candidates advised of result by email
Invitation to Assessment Centre
Assessment Centre attendance
Candidates advised of results of Assessment Centre by email
Final stages of selection process for successful applicants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Medical suitability</li><li>• Audiometry test</li><li>• Security and reference checks</li></ul>
Appointment to start next intake

### Application

The following points should always be taken into consideration as they are particularly important:

**We do not accept Curriculum Vitae (CVs) and we will not consider any received.**

Each vacancy has specific selection criteria, which has been agreed to reflect the exact types and ranges of skills and aptitudes required to perform the role. You will need to think very carefully about how you complete the 'Information in Support of Your Application' section. You must identify each criterion separately on the form (from the Job Description) evidencing how you meet each one separately.

Applications should ideally be completed by type. Font size should be in Arial and no less than font 10. Evidence must be restricted no more than three sides of A4. Any evidence which exceeds this will be removed.

The completed application forms must be returned BY POST or EMAIL, by no later than 12 noon on the closing date and to the address below:

**Alliance Resourcing, People Department**  
**Dorset Police Headquarters, Winfrith, Dorchester, Dorset DT2 8DZ**  
**Email:** [Force-Command-Recruitment@Dorset.PNN.Police.uk](mailto:Force-Command-Recruitment@Dorset.PNN.Police.uk)

We value your interest in opportunities with Dorset Police. If you are unsuccessful on this occasion, please do not let this put you off from applying again for other vacancies as and when they are advertised.



## **Assessment Centre**

If you are successful in your initial application, you will be invited to an Assessment Centre. The Assessment Centre will be either morning or afternoon lasting for approximately four hours. Please consider keeping this date free until you are notified if you have been shortlisted. The Assessment Centre will comprise of:

- Typing test
- Scenario based group exercise
- Diversion test and Short Term Memory Test
- Telephone test
- Structured interview

You will be sent more details of what to expect at the assessment centre with your invitation.

## **When will I be informed if I have been successful at the Assessment Centre?**

You will be informed of your assessment result by email approximately a week after the event.

If you are not selected on this occasion but have the potential to be suitable for future 101/999 Contact Officer/Radio Operator vacancies, there will be the opportunity to be retained on a waiting list. However, it should be noted that such opportunities are not guaranteed.

## **What are the remaining stages of the recruitment process if I am offered a vacancy?**

### **Medical suitability and audiometry test**

Once we have offered you a conditional offer of appointment, you will be sent a Health Declaration, Attendance Declaration and invited to attend an audiometry test with the Occupational Health Department.

Please note medical clearance, which includes the audiometry test, can on occasions take a reasonable period of time, as sometimes our Force Medical Officer may need to seek further guidance from your GP or specialist. This is to ensure that you are fit to perform the role and that your health and safety is not put at risk. To ensure validity these must be carried out close to any conditional appointment date. Should any complications occur, it may be necessary for the force to defer your appointment until this can be satisfactorily completed. A member of the Recruitment Team will liaise with you if this situation occurs.

<b>References and security checks</b>
Security and reference checks are required and will be taken forward by the Recruitment Team. Please note that in some cases security checks can also take a long time to be completed and complications can arise. In such circumstances the force will need to defer any appointment date until such a time as these checks are satisfactorily completed. Should this situation arise we will keep you fully informed.
<b>Appointment stage</b>
If all of the above mentioned pre-requisites are satisfactorily completed, the force will issue you with a formal offer of employment for your new role as a 101/999 Contact Officer/Radio Operator.

### **Equal Opportunities**

Dorset Police is committed to equality and diversity within its workforce and is determined to ensure that no job applicant, employee or volunteer receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of: gender, race, sexual orientation, marital/cohabitation status, nationality, ethnic or national origins, age, disability status, religious beliefs or trade union membership/non-membership.

Should you have any questions or queries regarding the recruitment process or role of the 101 & 999 Contact Officer / Radio Operator please do not hesitate to contact the Recruitment Team on: [Force-Command-Recruitment@Dorset.PNN.Police.uk](mailto:Force-Command-Recruitment@Dorset.PNN.Police.uk)