

A thank you letter to the Crime and Communications Centre from Chief Inspector Al Lumley [#543236209]

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Dear Claire,

As *International Control Room Week* comes to a close, I wanted to take a moment to give you a closer look inside the beating heart of Wiltshire Police – our Control Room. It's here that a dedicated team of officers and staff work tirelessly, every hour of every day, to keep you, your loved ones, and our wider communities safe.

Our Control Room operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year – never closing, never pausing. Every second, our teams are answering emergency 999 and non-emergency 101 calls, coordinating resources across Swindon and Wiltshire, and managing the wide range of incidents that unfold daily.

What many people don't see is the sheer scale of this operation – or the complexity and professionalism that goes into every single call.

As Chief Inspector for the Control Room, I have the privilege of leading almost 200 highly skilled and adaptable people. Our operating model is known for its flexibility, if a critical incident occurs, our staff can instantly switch focus and roles to ensure the right response at the right time. While much of our demand comes through traditional 999 and 101 channels, a growing number of incidents now arrive through online reports. Whatever the route, our teams ensure each request is assessed, prioritised, and handled with care and professionalism. It still surprises me how often serious crimes and incidents involving significant risk are reported online rather than over the phone, but regardless of how people reach out, our commitment remains the same: every call, every click, every message receives the highest level of service possible.

Over the past couple of years, our Control Room has undergone a remarkable transformation. Once one of the lowest-performing rooms nationally, we are now among the best. Consistently exceeding national standards for answering both 999 and 101 calls, and reducing the time it takes to get operational officers to those in need. For around the last year we have been hitting our national targets on 999 answer rates. Last month we achieved our best performance to-date at 7.6 seconds answering average, comfortably above the national average. This success is entirely down to the dedication and resilience of our staff, most of whom are themselves residents of Wiltshire and Swindon. They understand, first-hand, the importance of being there when it matters most.

For many people, calling the police on 999 may be the only call they ever make, perhaps on the worst day of their lives. Our staff never lose sight of that. They work tirelessly to ensure that each call is handled swiftly, professionally, and with empathy, doing everything possible to reduce harm and keep people safe.

Our team represents the very best of Wiltshire, people from all walks of life, with a wealth of experiences and backgrounds. From young adults beginning their careers to those nearing retirement who have spent their entire working lives here; from new parents juggling shift work and family life to grandparents passing on their wisdom. We have staff for whom English is their second or even third language, and those who have rarely stepped outside of Wiltshire. We have all shapes, sizes and differing abilities – and every person brings something unique. This diversity mirrors the communities we serve, helping our staff connect with, understand, and support callers through often deeply personal moments of crisis.

The work of a Control Room operator is far from easy. They face constant pressure and shifting demands, one moment taking a routine report, the next talking to someone in distress, perhaps threatening to harm themselves or others, or dispatching officers to a life-threatening emergency. Our staff often find themselves listening to danger unfold in real time, staying calm and focused as they direct help where it's needed most. Only after an incident concludes can they pause, take a brief moment to gather their thoughts, before preparing for the next unpredictable call.

In just one year, this small but exceptional team handles over 100,000 emergency (999) and nearly 200,000 non-emergency (101) calls, each one met with professionalism, compassion, and unwavering dedication. I see daily the toll this work can take on our operators, but I also see the pride, resilience, and camaraderie that keeps this team going strong.

This *International Control Room Week*, I want to express my deepest gratitude, not only to our own incredible team here at Wiltshire Police, but to every person working in emergency service control rooms across the country. They are the unseen first responders, calm voices in chaos, steady hands in moments of fear, and a constant source of reassurance when it matters most.

To the officers and staff of the Wiltshire Police Control Room: thank you for your professionalism, your empathy, and your relentless commitment to keeping Wiltshire safe – every second, every day, all year round.

Yours sincerely,

Chief Inspector Al Lumley

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(Wiltshire Police, Comms Officer, Corporate Communications)

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