



STRATEGIC POLICING AND CRIME BOARD

6th October 2015

Body Worn Camera – Update.

Purpose of Report

1. To update members of the Strategic Police and Crime Board on the results of the Body Worn Camera Pilots which have been carried out by West Midlands Police and completed in December 2014.

Introduction.

2. West Midlands police are currently facing a significant challenge. It is expected to provide the same or increased service performance and public service outcomes within a restricted cost envelope as a result of on-going austerity measures imposed by central government. To achieve these goals, the Force must take advantage of opportunities to improve efficiency and reduce or prevent demand, thereby reducing the volume of activity requiring Force assets.
3. Body Worn Cameras (BWC's) present such an opportunity.
4. BWC trials have been conducted across the UK, with police use of BWC's in the UK commencing with small-scale deployments of head-mounted video systems in the Devon & Cornwall Police in 2005. Since then, adoption of the technology has gradually expanded with over 40 forces now using BWC's to varying degrees across the UK, although typically on a relatively small trial scale.
5. In the United States, larger scale trials have been conducted and one randomised controlled trial in Rialto, California demonstrated a 59% reduction in use of force by officers

and a 90% reduction in complaints made against officers wearing BWC's in comparison to the control group.

6. Over the past few years external funding had been obtained in order to purchase numerous BWC systems which have over time either failed or have become redundant due to miss-management or misuse.
7. The benefits of the usage of BWC has been recognised for some time but there have been some concerns about the technology available, training needs, and police officer operability on the frontline.
8. It was decided that two pilots would take place testing equipment and workability and a randomised control trial would test the validity of anecdotal evidence gathered to date.

Pilot sites

9. Birmingham South LPU purchased BWC's from internal funding following a presentation to the OCPB suggesting the need for a formal trial replicating the Rialto study in conjunction with Cambridge University.
10. Wolverhampton and Birmingham West & Central LPU's purchased BWC's with funding from the Domestic Violence forum and their equipment was intended to be predominantly used by officers attending domestic violence incidents in an attempt to capture best evidence.
11. Birmingham South LPU purchased the Reveal Media RSX 3 model and both Wolverhampton and Birmingham West & Central LPU purchased Edesix Video Badge cameras. Both units are supported by their own software on standalone computers and are worn on the chest area of an officer's protective vest. They attach by means of a standard Airwave clip and are of similar size to an average smartphone.
12. The BWC's used at the Birmingham West & Central LPU deployed their cameras with their Community Action and Priority Teams (CAPT). The primary role of the CAPT team is to be deployed to incidents centred on the city's night-time economy.
13. The main motive of this pilot was to attempt to test the workability and technology available and review the outcome of BWC's usage.

Randomised Control Trial.

14. Birmingham South and Wolverhampton LPU's in conjunction with Cambridge University completed a randomised control trial (RCT) as part of a multisite RCT involving 24 tests in West Yorkshire, Peterborough, PSNI, and other international locations.

15. The hypotheses tested included:

Wearing body worn videos by patrol officers will:

- i) Decrease the number of recorded incidents of use of force,
- ii) Decrease number of citizens' complaints,
- iii) Increase satisfaction of members of the public coming into contact with the police,
- iv) Improved self-legitimacy of police officers,
- v) Increase rate of prosecution/charge/early guilty plea;

Compared to not wearing body worn videos.

16. BS LPU used BWC's with 46 officers across two response teams. The trial lasted 6 months and BWC's were worn during 430 officer shifts.

17. The trial compared personal issue of cameras and made them compulsory to wear. It was left to the officers discretion whether to record an incident or not and were worn by officers in high visibility stab vests only. The cameras were deployed to standard incidents so they were not used in public order situations, at football matches or during firearms operations.

Outcomes

18. Birmingham South officers wearing BWC's saw an overall increase in charge rate of 10%.

19. This included;

- i) 13% increases at Domestic violence incidents.
- ii) 22% increase at public order incidents.
- iii) 12% increase at racially-motivated incidents.

20. There was also an increase of early guilty plea by a rate of 9%, from 57% to 66% of all offences types. This illustrating that BWC evidence is less disputable and potentially more accurate than officer written actions and testimony.

21. In addition there was an overall decrease in case duration by 13.5% from an average of 74 to 64 days.

22. Over the 6 month time scale of the trial the response teams wearing BWC's received no complaints compared to 10 complaints being received by the three response teams not wearing BWC's.

Use of Force

23. When reviewing the use of force and the behaviour of both officers and members of the public involved in incidents, there have been some profound findings.

24. When BWC's were not worn the following applied;

- i) 106% increase in the use of physical restraint,
- ii) 100% increase in use of non-compliant handcuffing,
- iii) 89% increase in force being used.
- iv) 188% increase in injuries to offenders.

With regard to the above metrics initial findings suggest officers are almost twice as likely to use force during arrest when BWC's are not present and results in three times more injuries to offenders.

25. Overall there was a 54 % reduction in force used during confrontational encounters when officers are deployed with BWC.

Officer Injury

26. One of the key findings from the study was an increase in the recording of assaults against officers wearing BWC's. Over the trial period there were nine injuries reported against officers. Two were reported by officers not fitted with BWC's and the remaining seven had BWC.

27. It is believed there are potentially two explanations to this. The most probable being that officers are more likely to record an assault when they are supported by evidential footage of incident. Previously officers would have potentially ignored such incidents as part of the job and there was too much bureaucracy involved in reporting it. When incidents are presented in high definition then an immediate guilty plea is more likely and the extra work for officers has been avoided.

28. The other theory is that the BWC's escalate tension between members of the public and police attending an incident. However, there is no supporting evidence of this at this moment but more research needs to be completed to clarify these findings.

Future

29. The Body Worn Camera project is one of 34 work streams in the WMP 2020 portfolio and was signed off through the project development phases by Assistant Chief Constable Gary Cann. A detailed business case has been prepared and it will be put before the next

Organisational Change Board for a decision to proceed with the project. It is hoped that the project will be underway with the issue of BWC's to all response officers by April 2016.

Governance

30. As discussed the body worn camera project has been supported throughout by the Organisational Change Board process. The OPCC have been sighted on the developments to date and the West Midlands Police corporate communications department have shared updates and have supported 'Web chats' with regard to the project and the use of BWC's by officers.
31. Independent Advisory groups have been consulted on each LPU deploying the cameras and have offered valuable feedback.
32. The current BWC policy has been reviewed by Surveillance commissioner, a has been Privacy impact assessment completed and is published on WMP external website and Home Office guidance has also been obtained and followed.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

What has been the cost of the pilots – Equipment £37,000.

Where was funding received from – via Organisational Change Board (OCB).

What would be the costs should a full roll out be considered in the future – Figures will be confirmed following the next OCB.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

See above around data availability by protected characteristics

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