

BODY WORN VIDEO

Introduction

The decision to roll out Body Worn Video (BMV) across the West Mercia and Warwickshire Police Forces was confirmed in April 2017. Between then and the end of the year 2200 cameras were issued at a budgeted cost of £2.5m. The Chief Constables asked the TIE Committee to take a general view of the Project and two members of the Committee did this by visiting a number of areas and talking to the front line Officers who had been issued with the cameras. The reaction to BMV would appear a very positive one with the universal view that the benefits would be increasingly evident.

Policy and Procedures

The introduction of BMV was supported by documentation which comprehensively set out guidelines which were to be followed by users. Some additional guidelines were available for Armed Officers and Dog Support Officers. Some of the key principles highlighted by the documentation were that:

- All front facing Officers were to wear BMV when deployed on operational duties
- The decision when to start and stop recording rested with the individual Officers
- The user should make a verbal announcement that an incident was the subject of an audio and video recording, unless it was impractical to do so
- Covert recordings were not to be made other than in exceptional circumstances and authorised by a Senior Officer
- Users were reminded that BMV did not replace conventional forms of evidence gathering and must not be wholly relied on as supporting evidence. Pocket note books still had an essential purpose, particularly when giving evidence in court
- There was to be a mandatory use of BMV in cases of Domestic Abuse, Stop and Search and use of force such as the deployment of Tasers
- All BMV footage had to be uploaded onto a secure server prior to an Officer going off duty in order to enable uploading the footage
- The Officer was given 31 days to decide whether the recorded evidence was of use as evidence or could be deleted. Evidential footage was to be retained for a period of six years

Summary of Views Obtained from Officers using BMV

The BMV equipment is fully accepted and indeed officers would now feel uncomfortable without it. The benefits became more and more apparent over time. The initial training had been inadequate and mainly restricted to a brief online exercise. It was thought that the lack of training had been a direct result of the introduction of Athena and mobile phone changes taking priority at the same time. Most individual Officers claimed that they were largely self taught from interaction with each other but now felt comfortable with the use of BMV. Some would welcome further training with the IT aspects, such as down loading evidence onto a disc etc.

Benefits of BMV

Officers believed there was anecdotal evidence that the following benefits were being obtained:

- Deterrent to offending
- Protection of Police Officers
- Fewer complaints against the Police

- Quicker complaint resolution
- Increased number of early guilty pleas to offences
- Learning opportunities for Officers
- Digital sharing with the CPS
- Influence on behaviour of would be offenders
- Influence on traffic offenders, when stopped

Availability of Further Cameras

Some non-front line Officers, such as DC's, expressed the view that a cameras 'pool' could be invaluable in certain situations, e.g. for an arrest.

Conclusions

The introduction of BMV has been welcomed and it is believed that the benefits will become increasingly obvious.

One year on there are two suggestions as to how the success of BMV could be further consolidated. The guidelines should be revisited with the intention of taking a view as to whether any of them needed to be brought to the attention of Front Line Officers who did not have the opportunity of noting these guidelines at the time the equipment was introduced. Secondly, some Officers clearly consider they could make better use of the available information if they had better IT skills. Consideration should be given as to whether some limited form of further voluntary training should be made available.

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