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Body Worn Video – Public Briefing

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OFFICIAL

Summary

This briefing provides information on the proposed carriage and operational deployment of Body Worn Video (BWV) and how Police Scotland are making progress since the "Public Confidence Insights Pack" was presented at the SPA's Policing Performance Committee in March 2022.

What is Body Worn Video?

Body Worn Video (BWV) is a wearable digital camera that can record audio and video. BWV devices come in a range of physical and technical designs, but ultimately perform the same basic functions. It is most commonly worn on the chest. Although BWV is best known for its use in policing, it is also used in security, sports, recreation and firefighting, and is increasingly used in healthcare.

Why use Body Worn Video in policing?

Police Services have, for several decades, used video evidence from CCTV, Police vehicle systems and hand-held devices employed during specific operations.

In the UK, the Police use of BWV commenced with small-scale tests of a head-mounted video system in Plymouth (Devon and Cornwall Constabulary) in 2006. The system significantly improved the quality of evidence provided by Police Officers. Today, BWV is used by every Police Force in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

BWV creates a video and audio recording of an incident. The position of the camera means those watching the footage see the situation from the Officer's perspective. The camera acts as an independent witness, showing what a Police Officer saw, heard, said and did.

The use of BWV in policing offers several significant advantages. BWV enhances the transparency of policing operations, as recorded footage can be reviewed, scrutinised, and submitted as evidence, thereby increasing accountability for both officers and offenders.



Why use Body Worn Video in policing?

A major advantage of BWV is the provision of increased evidential quality. Traditionally, a Police Officer will make a written record of an incident, including language and gestures used, as soon as possible after the incident occurs.

Using BWV, the incident is recorded in real time and in high definition. It is limited only by the field of the camera's view, and audio range.

The resultant digital evidence is therefore more accurate and detailed than was previously possible. Doubts over what was said or done by any person can be reduced.

In the same context, BWV footage has been found to streamline investigations into complaints made against Police Officers by members of the public.

BWV can provide an accurate record of the situation and this has been proven to reduce investigative time.



The use of Body Worn Video by Police Scotland

BWV has been utilised by officers in A Division (Aberdeen) since June 2010, following a pilot programme conducted in a designated area of the former Grampian Police Force.

The pilot demonstrated that BWV provided substantial operational benefits, including enhanced evidence gathering, improved prosecution capabilities, and support in addressing complaints against the Police. This success led to an increased adoption of BWV devices across the region, with approximately 250 devices currently in use in Aberdeen.

In preparation for the COP26 conference in November 2021, Police Scotland equipped all Armed Policing (AP) Officers with a BWV solution, utilising Motorola's VB400 BWV cameras and the Digital Evidence and Asset Management (DEAM) system known as "Video Manager."

This system is currently employed by all AP officers during their deployments.

The benefits of Body Worn Video in policing

BWV enhances public trust by fostering greater transparency and decreasing the number of complaints against officers. Research indicates substantial improvements in operational effectiveness and the timely resolution of complaints across various Police Forces.

Furthermore, it reduces the number of officers required to attend court, particularly in relation to DESC and Summary Case Management, by streamlining case information.

Additionally, BWV significantly contributes to Officer safety and well-being, resulting in fewer assaults and improved reporting. It also enhances Officer morale and job satisfaction while reducing the duration of restricted duties pending investigations.

The initial phased rollout of BWV devices will begin in Spring 2025 and will include approximately 10,000 frontline response Officers and over 700 public-facing operational staff members to address the daily demands of a national policing service. The initial phase of rollout is expected to take around 12 months.

This rollout will include the implementation of comprehensive training, processes, standard operating procedures (SOPs), and rules of engagement to ensure the effective deployment of BWV systems.

Furthermore, this initiative may involve the installation of BWV infrastructure in approximately 260 police stations across Scotland, thereby creating more sustainable, modern, and secure workspaces for officers and staff engaged in public-facing operational roles.

This technology significantly enhances the quality of evidence in both criminal and non-criminal investigations, thereby strengthening court cases and reducing the number of cases dismissed due to insufficient evidence.



The implementation of BWV will not serve as a replacement for traditional policing techniques; officers will continue to gather and document evidence through conventional methods, such as obtaining statements from members of the public.

Officers will activate their cameras at the commencement of an incident or encounter and will, under normal circumstances, continue recording until it is no longer deemed 'proportionate or necessary.' Whenever practicable, officers will inform individuals that they are utilising the BWV device to record the interaction.

Public Surveys

In February 2021, Police Scotland conducted the first of two public consultations to assess public opinion regarding the use of BWV. The initial survey specifically focused on the deployment of BWV by Armed Policing Officers nationwide.

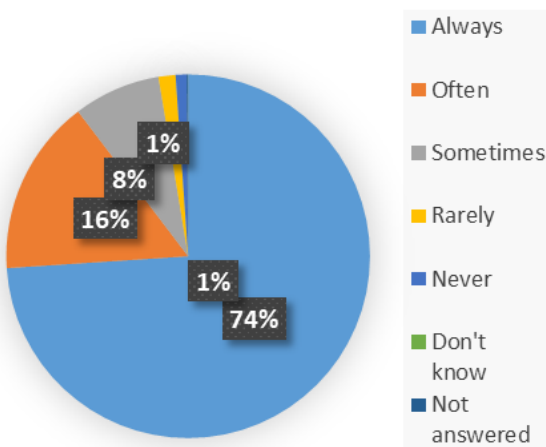
Nearly 9,000 responses were received, including over 1,000 from officers and staff, reflecting a broad spectrum of perspectives within our communities and organisation. The findings revealed that 73% of participants believed the use of BWV by Armed Policing Officers would enhance their sense of safety.

Additionally, 90% felt that BWV should be utilised at all times, and 78% reported that their trust and confidence in Police Scotland would increase if their interactions were recorded.

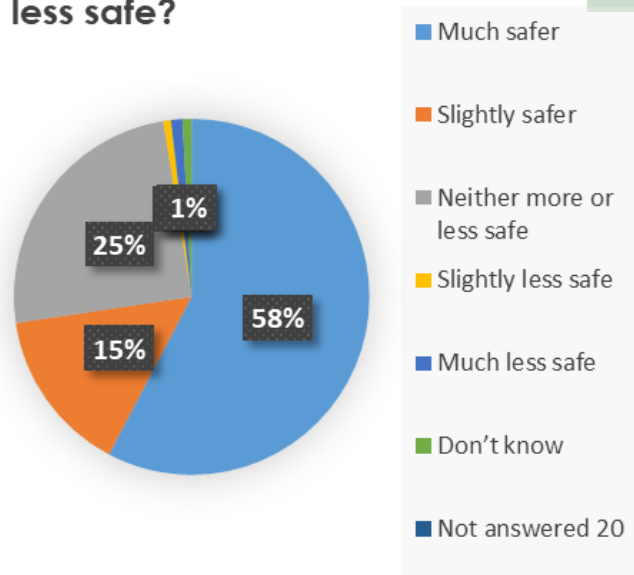
A subsequent public consultation was commissioned to gather insights on the national rollout of BWV and to understand its potential impact on both communities and operational staff. This survey garnered over 9,300 responses, echoing the strong support for BWV's introduction, with 90% of participants endorsing its use during Police activities.

Furthermore, more than 73% of respondents concurred that the implementation of BWV would enhance their trust and confidence in Police Scotland.

How frequently, if at all, do you think it would be appropriate for the police to record interactions using a body worn camera?



If a police officer decided to use a body worn camera during an interaction, would this make you feel more or less safe?



Oversight and assurance

Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority acknowledges that whilst there is a strong evidential base indicating the benefits of BWV, there are recognised privacy, data and third-party concerns. The introduction of technologies such as BWV must be balanced against the Police values of integrity, fairness, respect and human rights.

Police Scotland are committed to policing by consent and will only use BWV for a legitimate policing purpose, where it is considered necessary and appropriate to do so. BWV will not be used in covert surveillance and devices will never be intentionally hidden when in use.

To understand and mitigate against potential privacy and third-party concerns, Police Scotland has completed a full Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EqHRIA), and Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA). Impact assessments are reviewed and updated annually to reflect changes in legislation, policy and technology.

Furthermore, all Officers and operational staff will be provided with standardised training on the use of BWV and will be issued with a code of practice and associated standard operating procedures (SOPs) detailing how BWV should be used.

Following each criminal investigation where evidence has been recorded on BWV, evidential footage will be shared with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) via a jointly owned platform called Digital Evidence Sharing Capability (DESC).



Footage that is recorded but does not contain evidentiary value is automatically deleted from Police systems after 31 days. Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority are committed to monitoring the realisation of benefits derived from BWV and will report through established governance structures, thereby ensuring transparency and accountability.

The public consultations conducted throughout Scotland returned over 18,000 responses from members of the public, reflecting substantial interest in this area of policing and a strong motivation to engage in the manner in which we interact with our communities.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Police Scotland's current status and future considerations in relation to the Police Scotland Body Worn Video roll out is available [here](#).

University of Cambridge, Institute of Criminology research in to the use of Body Worn Video cameras is available [here](#).

Purpose of the Briefing

The Strategic Police Plan commits to the provision of Policing for a safe, protected and resilient Scotland. This requires designing and maintaining services which meet rising and evolving demands in a constantly changing environment.

To meet these demands, now and in the future, Scotland's police service must adapt and proportionately adopt the necessary technologies which will enable them to protect the safety and wellbeing of our communities (as outlined in the Policing Principles - Section 32 of Police and Fire Reform Act 2012). These public briefings also contribute to the Authority's statutory function to keep under review the policing of Scotland.

This series of public focused and user-friendly public briefings has been developed to provide an overview of the benefits of emerging technology and upcoming developments within policing, the policies that will govern them, and the ethical, privacy and human rights implications.

Keeping up to date

To keep up to date with our work, please keep an eye on the Scottish Police Authority's [website](#) where you can find more public briefings and factsheets on operational matters, topical issues and technology being used by Police Scotland.

There are also [links](#) to watch livestream committee discussions, and follow us on Twitter/X:

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