



THE MET POLICE: CREATING A DIGITAL EVIDENCE SYSTEM FOR THE FUTURE

London's Metropolitan Police Service is one of the largest police forces in the world. It has around 31,000 officers, 1,400 Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and 2,600 volunteer officers in its Special Constabulary working across 620 square miles and protecting 7.2 million people.

With body-worn video to play a lead role in law enforcement, the force has been pioneering research into the technology with the largest ever camera pilot. The initiative, run with academic rigour and involving peer review, was run by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and the College of Policing. It involved 1,000 officers across 10 boroughs with the trial's success leading to the decision to progress to a force-wide deployment of body-worn video.

THE MET POLICE: CREATING A DIGITAL EVIDENCE SYSTEM FOR THE FUTURE

"With Evidence.com, we've a purpose-built proven system to manage the video and audio files collected by officers. The cloud-based system allows us to get body-worn video to our officers quickly, with a minimum of fuss and at a much reduced cost, giving them a new and powerful way to demonstrate their professionalism, build the public's trust in the police and accelerate prosecutions."

Superintendent Adrian Hutchinson, Mobile Technology, Metropolitan Police

THE GOAL: IMPROVE TRANSPARENCY AND CONVICTION RATES

The goals of body-worn video are to increase conviction rates and accelerate justice for victims, better support officers in managing incidents and increase the public's confidence in the police. And, mindful that it was using taxpayer's money, the Metropolitan Police Service focused not only on securing value for money for the cameras, but on creating a scalable and flexible long-term solution for storing, managing, retrieving and sharing digital evidence.

THE SOLUTION: BODY-WORN VIDEO AND EVIDENCE.COM

The world's biggest roll-out of body-worn cameras is underway across the Metropolitan Police Service's 32 boroughs, with up to 22,000 Axon Body 2 and Flex 2 cameras supplied to officers. "The decision to go with Axon reflected two things," says Superintendent Adrian Hutchinson, Mobile Technology, Metropolitan Police. "The first was that Axon demonstrated the best value for money with a robust camera that works first time, every time, and lasts the full shift. But, more importantly, we're buying into a complete evidence management system in Evidence.com."

Evidence.com is Axon's dedicated Digital Evidence Management (DEM) system to securely and easily manage digital evidence – from videos, to images and audio – as well as any document types such as PDFs and Word files. It's accessed over a UK-based cloud so it's ready to go and can be switched on as forces roll out cameras. Each camera worn by an officer has a unique ID attached to it. When they dock their unit, footage is automatically downloaded to their Evidence.com account where they can attach case notes and files. In future Evidence.com will also be used by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) so that footage from body worn video can be securely shared between the Metropolitan Police and the CPS.

RESULTS: A DIGITAL EVIDENCE PLATFORM FOR THE FUTURE

A headline finding of the trial – with similar results in the full roll-out – was a 33% reduction in complaints. This shows how cameras change confrontation psychology: they're highly visible and provide an irrefutable record – so it's no longer just an officer's word against a suspect's. The service is seeing an increase in early guilty pleas, which significantly reduce paperwork and costs. And prosecutions for domestic violence are rising, with audio and video collected from the scene compensating for the reluctance of some victims to press charges.

Furthermore, body-worn video is being used as a training tool for individual officers to support their development with senior officers able to use video footage to validate that officers' target competencies have been achieved (without having to physically shadow them on the street).

Evidence.com is driving further benefits, too. As it's cloud-based, the Metropolitan Police Service did not have to invest in building a secure data warehouse – resulting in big cost savings. Says Superintendent Adrian Hutchinson: "Evidence.com provides a lower-cost, ready-to-go alternative to capture, store, manage, retrieve and share digital evidence. It's scalable, too, with unlimited storage on tap. In future we'll potentially use the system to store images and footage supplied by the public, such as CCTV, while the ability to share digital files with the CPS is huge for us. It promises big savings in time and money as we'll no longer need to burn DVDs and courier or hand-deliver files to the CPS."

In addition, the Metropolitan Police Service will potentially benefit from new applications being developed by Axon. As these are offered 'as-a-service' via the cloud, they can be easily rolled out to officers as soon as they're available. Examples include more intuitive ways to search video footage, and live video streaming from body-worn cameras.

With his concluding comments on the body-worn video solution, Superintendent Adrian Hutchinson says: "Londoners can feel reassured during their interactions with us, while we can better show the professionalism of our officers in the face of some of the incredibly demanding situations they deal with daily. With complaints down and early guilty pleas up, video is delivering against its promise of being one of the most important developments in policing in years."

