

Body-worn cameras – how and when to use

Increasing understanding of body-worn cameras (BWCs) for police and staff.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Prevention
Topic	Violence (other) Criminal justice Investigation
Organisation	Kent Police
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Region	South East
Partners	Police Criminal justice (includes prisons, probation services)
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.

Key details

Start date	February 2018
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Adults Children and young people Communities Families General public Offenders Victims Workforce

Aim

To ensure all members of the public and staff are treated under the codes of practice and to evidence criminal activity directly relating to body-worn video (BWV).

Body-worn video users are encouraged to:

- obtain as much evidence as possible
- provide additional commentary if possible
- begin recording at the earliest opportunity

There is clear guidance on the evidential value of BWV in criminal cases such as the recording of the location of objects and evidence at the scene of a crime or during the search of premises. However, the force ensures that staff don't see a video recording as a replacement for a written record of incidents.

Intended outcome

To increase police and staff understanding of the use of BWV.

Description

The purpose of this policy is to provide the procedures and protocols required for the application, deployment and overt use of BWV cameras by police officers for the purpose of gathering evidence or intelligence.

Currently, Kent & Essex Police currently share this policy but have separate BWV standard operating procedures outlining detailed processes for the use of BWV in both forces. Moving forward there will be a single joint policy for both forces with separate operating procedures sat underneath.

- Kent Police's policy for BWV highlights that officers must use it when exercising any police power, including use of force, stop and search, making an arrest and when attending domestic incidents.
- If BWV isn't used in the above circumstances, the policy requires officers to document the reasons why.
- Users are encouraged to obtain as much evidence as possible, provide additional commentary if possible, and begin recording at the earliest opportunity.
- There is clear guidance on the evidential value of BWV in criminal cases – for example, for recording the location of objects and evidence at the scene of a crime or during the search of premises. However, the force makes sure that staff don't see a video recording as a replacement for a written record of incidents.

Context

Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) were undertaken and approved by Kent's diversity and inclusion (D&I) team. Aspects covered were members of the public that could not hear the warning of BWV being used, and members of the public who may not see the flashing LEDs. The EIA took place to show that Kent's D&I policy of inclusion were represented. The aim was to ensure that no group or protected characteristic was disadvantaged and that all views were considered.

Extensive internal and external consultation was undertaken involving:

- Kent & Essex Police Federations
- Essex diversity and inclusion manager
- Health and safety
- Head of operational change
- Professional standards department detective superintendent

- Policy
- Superintendents association
- Strategic force crime and incident registrar
- Data protection officer and temporary head of info management
- Support network chairs and vice chairs
- Strategic criminal justice
- Local policing areas chief inspectors
- Digital forensics
- Learning and development
- Positive action leads for Kent and Essex
- Geographic services
- Independent police advisory group
- Policy owners
- Kent BWV leads
- Essex BWV leads

Funding

Funding was given internally for the procurement of BWV, future funding is now within the digital asset management system (DAMS) project over the next 8 years including camera refresh, moving from Axon AB3 model to the AB4 model in 2025.

Governance

Scrutiny is provided via the stop and search/use of police powers board chaired by the assistant chief constable and the oversight of cases that do not have BWV turned on is part of the consultation with external IPAG representation as well as force heads of department. Cases of this nature are low in number suggesting compliance with policy. This group is led by the tactical policing powers board at superintendent level.

Overall impact

This policy is seen as promising practice by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and force wide.

Feedback indicates that officers and staff now fully understand the use of BWV in day-to-day operational use, and effectively supervised and maintained DAMS evidence is now exceptional.

Learning

- Reviewed retention approach to evidence on DAMS moving away from management of police information (MOPI) in evidence.com the force used "offence selection".
- Learning was that officers did not know what MOPI was and were over or under retaining evidence.
- MOPI is more about the offender than evidence. The focus is now on the new national National Police Chiefs' Council retention guidelines and the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996 to ensure compliance with retention of BWV and digital evidence and preventing under or over retaining of this evidence.

Best available evidence

See the [Crime Reduction Toolkit](#) for the best-available evidence on [Body-worn cameras | College of Policing](#)

[HMICFRS identified practice](#) (page 14).

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Tags

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