

Cartell.ie - digital live time vehicle checks

A web-based subscription service, which provides immediate access to information from several databases around vehicles registered to the Republic of Ireland, a current capability gap for Police National Computer (PNC).

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Key details

Does it work?	Promising
Focus	Prevention Organisational
Topic	Intelligence and investigation Operational policing
Organisation	Hertfordshire Constabulary
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Region	Eastern
Partners	Police Private sector
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.
Start date	February 2024

Key details

Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	General public Offenders Workforce

Aim

To use Cartell.ie as a means of conducting live time checks on Republic of Ireland registered vehicle to:

- enhance Herts Police's information and intelligence gathering capability
- disrupt offenders and criminal groups relying on foreign registered vehicles
- expedite enquiries for criminal investigations

Cartell.ie is a tool to supplement existing policing capabilities. It is not intended to replace or supplant approved police force mutual assistance information sharing processes or indeed shortcut existing channels for sharing data.

Intended outcome

Measuring outcomes relative to a baseline of data is somewhat challenging. Firstly, no historic data is captured on Irish vehicles involved in criminality or the number of crimes where they are a line of enquiry. Similarly, the Garda or Interpol do not keep data specific to the number of enquiries made to them. Additionally, neither they nor our systems can give an accurate understanding of how long such an enquiry may take.

As such, measuring reduction in investigation times may not be possible. Instead, our outcomes are based upon reviewing the additional service, proactivity, and enforcement actions we can facilitate. The force expect to see:

- positive disposals (vehicle seizures, arrests etc.) that would not have been achieved without the service

- meaningful adoption around the force with sufficient checks annually to justify the expense of subscription whether they result in enforcement action, contribute to an investigation or neither

Description

The initiative began as a suggestion by a neighbourhood police officer who had researched the company, typically used by retailers and consumers in the UK. The idea was submitted through the prevention first portal (organisational improvement and preventative practice proposal portal) for consideration for it to be adopted permanently by Hertfordshire Constabulary.

A short proof of concept trial was created in a local division and Cartell.ie agreed to a 50-day free period. The limited scope of the trial did not allow accurate conclusions to be drawn on the impact of force-wide implementation. However, it was met with praise at every level. Many officers and staff anecdotally cited instances where investigations or road stops had been impacted by the lack of quick information. Coupled with the small subscription cost of Cartell.ie, this resulted in authorisation for force-wide deployment in February 2024.

The trial revealed several key risks and issues to address and therefore, responsibility for managing the launch was passed to Prevention First (PF) Hub. The most significant risk being the need for a robust anti-corruption audit process since Cartell.ie is not intended to be a law enforcement software package.

Whilst Cartell.ie is a web-based service, the PF Hub created an intranet portal that would serve as the hub for everything Cartell.ie. The portal hosted an audit form and the link to Cartell.ie as tiles on the page (in addition to key materials and information). Furthermore, training and access was limited to specific intelligence and roads policing teams to ensure audit compliance.

A simple improvement was implemented shortly after launch, when the audit was found to only be 90% compliant. PF Hub removed the link to Cartell.ie, instead placing it at the end of the audit form, ensuring officers completed the form before any check could be attempted. This has proved to be effective, and consideration is being made to widen access to the frontline.

Launching the service force-wide involved approximately 33 workdays for two officers from the PF Hub working on deployment, process, policy, design, and training. An estimated further 36 days over 6 months was required to monitor and evaluate progress in addition to delivering further

improvements. The annual subscription cost of £1,000 was secured from the force innovation fund.

Evaluation

An internal evaluation is being conducted based on data between the launch in February 2024 to August 2024.

Focus groups and surveys are planned for the end of evaluation period to understand adoption and sentiment toward the service internally.

The evaluation also looking at how it is implemented, how and why it works or doesn't work, for whom it works or doesn't work and how much it costs or saves.

Overall impact

Measuring impact relative to a baseline is not easy for this initiative.

From preliminary findings, 50 days post-launch there has been 35 checks conducted at a rate of 0.7 per day. Certain areas have yet to conduct checks whilst others (including the pilot area) show clear signs of embedding it as regular business tool. This deserves further examination, and it is possible this could reflect the geographical prevalence of Irish registered vehicles. However, the county is not so large that such a disparity would be so noticeable. With further efforts to promote adoption, exposure, and familiarity, the 0.7 figure may increase. Ultimately, the raw number of checks per day is limited in what one can infer, however, it at least provides an indication of demand for its supply.

Perhaps of greater significance is the number of positive disposal outcomes directly attributable to the supply of Cartell.ie. Since the launch, there has been four instances where vehicles have been seized or prohibited. This only refers to positive disposals realised at the roadside. In the fullness of time, some checks conducted for crime enquiries in police stations might also result in positive disposals long after the check. With the low cost of subscription (£1,000 per year), the benefit from criminal disruption has likely already outweighed the cost of the initiative.

The project team will continue to monitor and evaluate the performance of Cartell.ie.

Learning

One month after the launch, frontline teams were asked about their knowledge and awareness of the service. In two thirds of cases the teams initially did not recognise the name Cartell.ie, but all teams were aware of the new "Irish vehicle check" system when prompted. Using the brand name rather than a descriptive title had created, in some cases, an assumption that it was a specialist tool or something not immediately relevant for their roles. There have been similar cases in the past when using operation names for an initiative. Officers will tend to filter out non-descriptive names, as can be seen when officers request ANPR checks rather than back office facility (BOF) or National ANPR Standards (NAS).

The brand name of Cartell.ie is used internally to prevent confusion and maintain continuity, but it is ensured that references highlight the descriptive title as well (Irish Vehicle Checks).

An additional reflection already alluded to, was the need to force officers and staff to engage with the auditing process. The audit form and Cartell.ie link were launched as tiles on the portal next to each other. By narrowing access to a small number of users, a compliance rate of 90% was achieved, but this was not viewed as acceptable. It was a very simple solution to remove the Cartell.ie link and only provide it at the end of the audit form.

Best available evidence

Confirmed.

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