

Enhanced video response (EVR) – Dorset Police

An optional video frontline response service for situations that do not require an emergency, in-person response.

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Key details

Does it work?	Smarter practice
Topic	Vulnerability and safeguarding
Organisation	Dorset Police
Target group	Victims

Smarter practice

Overview

Enhanced video response (EVR) is an alternative to the traditional response to calls for service in which an officer would physically attend a scene. For incidents that are assessed as not requiring an emergency, in-person response, but would otherwise still require a police officer to attend, victims are offered the option to engage with a police officer via a video call.

Within Dorset Police these calls are known as 'Grade 3' and have a target response time of within 48 hours. All forces differ in the naming and response time targets for incidents that do not require an emergency response. The key is that EVR should only be applied to incidents where a police officer would be sent, but not one where their attendance would require the use of blue lights and sirens.

The video calls are hosted on GoodSAM, although other platforms are available. The chosen platform should be simple for victims to use, not requiring them to download any software or an app

to join the call.

During a video call, officers conduct an initial investigation. This covers all the victim-focused elements of the primary investigation, which can be done via video call. This often includes completing safeguarding assessments and referrals, obtaining digital evidence and taking a victim statement.

Several benefits have been observed from the new response to eligible Grade 2 and Grade 3 incidents, including:

- reduced wait times for victims
- increased victim satisfaction
- improved investigation standards
- improved engagement with the criminal justice system
- improved positive outcomes
- greater police efficiency, resulting in cost and time savings

Problem

In 2022, the [HMICFRS PEEL inspection of Dorset Police](#) highlighted concerns about how long the organisation takes to meet calls for service and the standard of investigations once that call has been completed. There was particular concern about the number of calls risk assessed as Grade 3 – threat, risk, harm identified but an immediate response not required – that were waiting to be attended to, as well as the length of time these callers were waiting for further contact.

In 2023, the average time taken to respond to a Grade 3 incident was 21 days. This delay had a negative impact on victim satisfaction and the management of ongoing risk. It resulted in the loss of vital evidential opportunities, which negatively impacted the victim's outcome.

Force demand was mapped so that all routes into the force were understood and included in an analysis of demand. To facilitate the reporting of criminal events to the police, there are multiple avenues through which individuals can establish communication.

Dorset Police offers three primary channels through which members of the public can submit reports:

- the traditional phone call method
- physically visiting a police station and reporting the crime to a station desk officer
- online reporting platforms

All calls for service received by Dorset Police are routed through the Contact Management Command. Call takers and station desk officers engage individuals making reports in conversation, either during the initial contact (over the phone or in person) or via a call back if the incident is reported online. Every call for service is recorded on a computer-aided dispatch (CAD) log which has a unique reference number.

A threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability and engagement (THRIVE) assessment is conducted on every report. This informs the grade at which the incident will be recorded.

The target response time for incidents which are assessed as requiring a Grade 1 (immediate) response are set at a national level. However, the target response times for lower graded incidents are set by individual forces. These target response times must be published and every force must endeavor to respond to all victims within these published times.

Dorset Police opted to offer EVR treatment for incidents assessed as requiring a Grade 3 response. The target response time for these is within 48 hours, and they make up the majority of incidents attended by Dorset Police.

Prior to EVR, almost all incidents assessed as Grade 3 were assigned to patrol teams. The force control room (FCR) attempted to dispatch an officer via the radio to as many of these as possible.

However, for incidents where the victim could not be reached within a reasonable time, or where there were no resources available to deploy, the incident log would be closed. The investigation would then be allocated to an individual patrol officer to attend during the course of their duties.

This process of closing an incident and allocating it to an individual officer created a hidden pool of demand. Victims were still awaiting a service but there was no process to actively manage the ongoing risk to those victims or measure response times. It also created conflicting demands for patrol officers. They were responsible for attending incidents as they were broadcast by the FCR, as well as those incidents that had been closed without attendance and allocated to them personally.

Prior to the implementation of EVR and following a period of austerity, Dorset Police closed a large number of inquiry offices. This resulted in the number of in-person reports decreasing.

Meanwhile, the launch of Single Online Home in March 2023 provided a nationally developed platform for police forces in England and Wales, enabling the public to report crimes, get advice and access local police information in one place. This led to an increase in online reports, resulting in a backlog of over 1,000 submissions.

This backlog would require approximately 17 days of processing to determine the risk and ensure the appropriate response was allocated to each case. Not only is this processing delay potentially harmful to victims. It also increases existing demand on the police as it is likely victims will recontact the FCR to follow up on what is happening with their case.

Response

Inspired by the public's embrace and acceptance of technical solutions during the COVID-19 pandemic and Kent Police's successful implementation of [rapid video response](#), Dorset Police created EVR to scale up the benefits of video response to more victims of crime. EVR refers to the offering of a virtual response to Grade 3 incidents. These account for approximately 66% of all incidents reported to Dorset Police that require attendance.

The implementation of EVR required that after a call was assessed as a Grade 3, an automated display prompted the call handler to consider the EVR deployment option and recite a predetermined set of instructions to the caller. If the caller agreed to receive a video response, a series of questions were asked to check eligibility.

To be eligible to receive EVR, the victim must be over the age of 18 or have a parent or carer available to join the call. The offender must not be present. If any individual responded negatively to the EVR option, the call handler proceeded with the customary procedure of obtaining all relevant information and transmitting it to the dispatcher assigned to the corresponding dispatch channel.

Once a call has been placed in an EVR queue, it is reviewed by an EVR sergeant to ensure suitability. The sergeant will also decide on the level of EVR response provided.

Most incidents will be added to an EVR queue and EVR officers self-dispatch to these based on the time and date the incident was reported (working from the oldest first). However, if an EVR

sergeant identified a vulnerability with the victim, or a potentially high-harm offence, they would allocate the incident to the next available EVR officer to attend.

Through either method, the EVR officer begins their attendance by checking that the victim is in a suitable location to join a video call and which device they would like the link to be sent to. If there has been a delay of more than a few minutes between the incident being reported and an EVR officer being dispatched, this will usually result in the officer contacting the victim on the telephone.

The officer will then send the link to the victim and update the CAD log to show that they have 'arrived'. The officer then proceeds with the response as they would do if they had physically attended the scene or the victim's home.

Initial video call

The video response is conducted using GoodSAM, which allows for the video call to be recorded in the same way as body-worn video (BWV). The technology also facilitates file sharing and screen sharing. This means the victim can share photo and video content with the police, and the technology allows the sharing of much larger files than is possible by email. Statements can also be taken and signed during the call.

The expectation is that the EVR officer will complete all the initial enquiries and safeguarding tasks that would have been completed if the response had been in person. This includes, where appropriate, conducting a victim needs assessment, a public protection notification, a domestic abuse risk assessment, providing safeguarding advice and making referrals.

EVR officers also complete all victim-focused elements of a primary investigation (that can be achieved remotely). This includes obtaining copies of any digital evidence (such as photos, screenshots and CCTV), arranging to secure any physical evidence (for example, by booking in a crime scene investigator to attend), obtaining a victim statement and identifying further lines of enquiry such as potential witnesses.

Evidential review

The video response can be paused by either party and rejoined without losing the link. This allows the officer to review digital evidence that has been submitted and/or seek advice from a sergeant during the call if necessary. Only the police can actually close the link, which they do when the call is complete. This means the link cannot be reused to call the police EVR team member again.

After completing all possible victim-focused enquiries during the initial video call, the officer will then complete the investigation records and submit to an EVR sergeant for review. The reviewing sergeant will then take one of four actions.

- If a suspect has been identified and supporting evidence which could lead to a realistic prospect of conviction has been obtained by the EVR, they will pass the investigation to a patrol team to progress the case to conclusion.
- If no suspect has been identified, but further, proportionate and necessary lines of enquiry have been identified, or an in-person safeguarding visit is required, they will pass the investigation to a patrol or neighbourhood policing team to progress.
- If it is unclear whether the case can be progressed, but further desk-based lines of enquiry have been identified, they pass it back to an EVR officer to progress.
- If the case cannot be progressed, it will be finalised within the EVR. There is an expectation that evidential reviews are completed within 24 hours of the video call being concluded. If a case is to be progressed (with the EVR or by a patrol team), the EVR sergeant must add an investigation plan.

Logic model

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| Problem | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Force not meeting its response times for responding to 999 calls.• Force not meeting its target for responding to 101 calls.• Large numbers of online requests for service were in a backlog. |
|----------------|---|

- Introduction of enhanced video response (EVR) to all Grade 3 (non-urgent) callsowners during patrols.

Resources:

Response

- EVR officers: must be PIP 1 investigators, either police constable (PC) or police staff.
- EVR sergeant: a dedicated sergeant per team to provide consistency and performance management.
- Video call platform (such as GoodSAM): the platform must be simple for victims to use and allow for calls to be recorded.
- Estate space: must be suitable for the number of EVR officers and take into consideration the overall level of sound in the room to minimise distractions for victims during video calls.
- Noise cancelling headphones: to minimise distractions for EVR officers during video calls.

Documentation:

- Blueprint.
- EVR officer training material.
- Academic evaluation paper.
- Process documents.
- Force control room (FCR) staff training material.
- Number of calls taken by EVR officers.
- Proportion of Grade 3 calls responded to by EVR.
- Number of officers on restricted duties working in roles where their skills are being used.

Outputs

- Decrease in number of cases on patrol teams' workloads.
- Increased rate of suspect interviews.
- Increased standard of investigations.
- Shorter overall investigation times for Grade 3 incidents.

- Reduced time from call to response for Grade 3 calls.
- Reduced time between call and end of initial investigation.
- Increased rate of 'positive outcomes' (for example, arrests, warnings, cautions, as opposed to no-further-action case closures).

Outcomes

- Efficiency and financial savings gained from reduced travel time (which can be reinvested in incidents that require in-person attendance).
- Improved victim satisfaction rates.
- Improved officer wellbeing for EVR officers and response officers.

- [View logic model as a poster](#)

Foundation principles of EVR

Victim led

Victims must always be given the option to opt in to receive EVR treatment. EVR is not a demand management tool; performance measurement and key performance indicators (KPIs) must reflect this and not simply focus on demand removed from other teams.

Resourcing

The EVR blueprint does not dictate which incidents must be treated by the EVR. However, suitable incident grade(s) and types must be identified, and suitable resources allocated to the EVR to treat these.

Video not phone

EVR officers must use video consultations to speak with victims face to face as often as possible.

Initial investigation

After establishing contact with a victim, EVR officers must conduct as many victim-focused elements of the primary investigation as possible to complete during a video call. If further enquiries that are not victim focused or that require attendance in person are identified, they must be clearly detailed by the EVR officer in the investigation record and passed to another team to complete.

Early evidential reviews

Sufficient sergeants must be in place to carry out evidential reviews of every incident attended by an EVR officer. The aim should be to carry these out within 24 hours of attendance. If an investigation is to be finalised, victims should be updated promptly. If an investigation is to be progressed, a clear investigation plan must be added before the investigation is passed on to another team.

Team not tactic

An EVR team must be a singular body of officers, ideally co-located, with a sergeant who is responsible and accountable for the development and welfare of officers on their team. The EVR function may consist of multiple teams to provide sufficient coverage. Officers must be posted or attached to an EVR team on a long-term basis and not given EVR duties for singular shifts.

Implementation

Scoping EVR

- Executive and senior leadership buy-in – before commencing any preparatory work, both the force executive and senior leadership must understand EVR and the benefits it can bring, and be prepared to make the necessary investment of resources.
- Process review – the first step for implementation is to review existing processes and policies to gain an understanding of how calls are received and treated prior to EVR. This will help establish a process for embedding EVR into the force.
- Demand analysis – it is important to complete an analysis of demand coming into the force and a definition of what calls will be within the scope of the video response. The resource commitment must be considered alongside this to ensure it is matched to anticipated demand.
- EVR policy – following findings from the process review and demand analysis, an EVR policy should be created to provide an overview of how it will operate. The policy should include key information such as which incidents are suitable for EVR, as well as sergeants' and PCs' responsibilities and investigation standards. Additionally, assisting policies, such as resource deployment policies which relate to EVR, should be amended to include the new virtual response.
- Establishing KPIs – KPIs should be established to assist in monitoring the impact of EVR. These should reflect the focus of EVR on enhancing the victims' journey. Forces should avoid setting targets relating to officers attending a certain number of incidents per shift as this will shift the focus to quantity over quality.

External/partnership engagement

- Stakeholder engagement – throughout the process of implementing EVR, engaging with stakeholders and key staff is vital as it will encourage trust and compliance with the change in the operating model.
- Force legal team and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) – engaging with the force legal team and the CPS can enhance decisions made regarding electronically signed statements as well as the usage and redaction of consultation video recordings, minimising any risks to the force.
- EVR, FCR and patrol working group – these are the three stakeholders most affected by the implementation of EVR. Thought should be given to establishing regular meetings so progress can be monitored, and any feedback or operational issues can be highlighted and resolved.
- Media and communication strategy – an internal communication strategy is needed to detail the working process of EVR and the possible benefits it can provide to the wider force. This is important in preventing negative perceptions from forming, which may happen if officers are removed from their team or department for use in EVR.
- External communication strategy – an external communication strategy is needed to ensure improvements in response times, victim satisfaction and positive outcomes are recognised as the reasons for implementation.

Recruitment of the EVR team

After conducting reviews, forces should have a better understanding of how many officers they need to recruit for EVR. The initial EVR team in Dorset consisted of officers taken from local policing area response teams.

It was decided this would be appropriate as it was theorised that response teams would be the department benefiting most from EVR. This is because some of their demands would be lifted by the EVR team and hence the impact of extracting officers from response teams for use in EVR would be a net positive.

All the officers allocated to join the EVR trial were individuals who were non-deployable or who sergeants suggested would benefit from this move as they were displaying signs of impending burnout.

The post-trial EVR team in Dorset is comprised of 35 PCs and five sergeants, however, due to sickness and vacant posts the actual figure is often lower. They are split into five working teams, working three-day shifts and three late shifts, followed by four rest days. EVR is therefore available

seven days a week between 8am and 10pm.

Once the number of EVR officers required has been established, it is important to consider the ratio of sergeants to PCs. Police sergeants are responsible for conducting evidential reviews; dip sampling EVR calls to check against EVR compliance; and conducting one to ones with officers.

Given the large responsibility EVR sergeants have, it is important to get this ratio right, so that they do not get overwhelmed and neglect any of their responsibilities. A ratio of approximately 1:7 has been found to be suitable in a number of forces.

It is also vital to appoint a strategic and tactical lead to maintain oversight of EVR and its day-to-day operation. Additionally, it is worth considering nominating a single point of contact who will be responsible for liaising with the FCR and the EVR team.

While it is not practical to base EVR officers physically in control rooms, a facility to ensure regular two-way communication should be established, such as a Microsoft Teams chat.

Resource allocation

- Identify EVR team location – identifying a space for the EVR team to co-locate is essential as it will encourage a team ethic and enable effective supervision. This is even more crucial if you are using non-deployable officers who often have enhanced welfare needs. Additionally, thought should be given to the office layout to minimise officers appearing in the background of other video consultations as they move around the office.
- Other resources – the EVR team should be provided with noise cancelling headphones to enable them to focus on what the victim is saying. Consideration should be given to voice-isolating technology and acoustic partitions if necessary.
- Video recordings – the service provided by EVR officers is fundamentally the same as colleagues on patrol who attend in person with BWV. The recording and retention of video consultations is a key policy for EVR and should be considered in the same light as the BWV policy. Suitable software and procedures should be implemented to ensure MoPI retention and redaction needs can be met.
- Amend command-and-control software – command-and-control software needs to be updated to facilitate asking EVR suitability questions, recording victims' responses and allocating suitable incidents to the EVR team. It should also be amended to allow EVR officers to self-deploy to incidents, which will facilitate the accurate measuring of response times.

Training provision

The training of EVR officers should be approached from the perspective that they are doing the same work as patrol officers, but via video. Specific considerations for EVR officer training include the following.

- Additional CAD functionality (such as self-dispatch).
- Use of a video consultation platform (such as GoodSAM) and the management of associated video recordings.
- Safeguarding victims during video consultations.
- Conducting investigations via video consultation.

Call handlers should be given training to enable them to:

- identify potentially suitable incidents
- ask and record the answers to the EVR suitability questions
- pass an incident to the EVR team
- answer questions from victims about how the process works

Training should also be delivered to EVR officers and call handlers on contingencies to maintain the service in the event of the failure of command-and-control software.

Testing EVR

Business-as-usual (BAU) functions are slightly different in every force. As such, the implementation of EVR in every force needs to be fine-tuned to integrate with these. It is recommended that a phased approach is taken to implementation to enable barriers or challenges to be identified and overcome ahead of a full rollout.

Moreover, incident data obtained during the first phase can be used to create a new demand profile. This may assist with additional decisions taken before full EVR implementation.

Monitoring EVR usage

Once EVR has been rolled out across the force, ongoing governance of EVR is required to ensure it is operating as anticipated. This should be assisted with a performance framework which includes a core set of easy-to-measure metrics, such as response times and investigation outcomes, along with any additional metrics required by individual forces. Core metrics should include the following.

- Volume of incidents recorded which are of suitable grade/type and how many of those are passed to the EVR team.
- Number of officers working in EVR.
- Response time for EVR incidents.
- Positive outcomes achieved from incidents that began with EVR.
- Victim withdrawal (outcome 14 and outcome 16) for incidents that began with EVR.

Outcomes and impact

Randomised controlled trials of EVR have been conducted in Dorset Police (2023) and Avon and Somerset Police (2024/25). Eligible calls were randomly assigned to either the treatment group, where individuals could opt to receive a virtual response, or the control group, which received the BAU response.

Random assignment was dependent on the last digit of the incident number. Analysis of police data and victim surveys from both trials indicate that EVR effectively addresses the high demand on police resources, improves the experience for victims and offers a cost-effective solution for police forces.

Additional key outcomes from the Dorset trial include the following.

- EVR reduced victim wait times, with the virtual response being on average 19 days faster than the traditional in-person response.
- EVR increased engagement with the criminal justice process. In the control group, 36% of cases were coded as outcome 16 (victim withdraws support for prosecution) compared to just 21% in the treatment group. These findings are statistically significant.
- Victims who received EVR treatment were 238% more likely to achieve a positive outcome in their case compared to those from the control group.
- EVR cases were 76% more likely to reach the stage of a suspect being arrested or voluntarily interviewed than cases in the control group.
- EVR enhanced victim satisfaction, with 67% of participants stating they were satisfied with the overall outcome of their initial call, compared to only 27% for the control group.
- The standard of investigation for EVR cases was higher than those in the control group when compared against College of Policing investigation standards. Every investigation in the trial was reviewed by a detective sergeant independent of the trial team. EVR cases were found to be 96.8% compliant with these standards overall, compared to 67% for cases in the control group.

- EVR improved confidence in the police and perceptions of police legitimacy. 43% of the treatment group stated their opinions on Dorset Police had improved compared to 19% of the control group.
- Overall, nearly 90% of treatment participants said they would use EVR again and would recommend the service to others.
- EVR proved to be an effective method to help non-deployable officers back to the workplace, with six out of seven officers who joined the trial team while non-deployable due to medical or burnout reasons returning to full duties after the trial period.
- After a three-month trial, EVR resulted in travel cost savings of £27,283. If implemented force-wide, with all eligible victims receiving EVR, estimated savings would be £303,999. It is worth noting that cost savings are likely to be higher when additional costs are considered. These include reduced officer sick days, reduced call-back demand into the FCR and a reduction in FCR supervisor reviews on open incidents.
- EVR alleviated pressure on frontline officers who were not part of the trial team, leading to reduced stress and anxiety, and increased job satisfaction.
- EVR also helped relieve the pressures on the FCR. The decrease in open CAD logs, by 75%, resulted in a reduction in failure demand coming back into the FCR. It reduced the need for call handlers to recontact victims to reassess risk and establish the victim's availability.

Learning and recommendations

The randomised controlled trial in Dorset Police and Avon and Somerset Police identified several key insights for other forces to consider when implementing EVR.

- A risk aversion culture was observed in the command-and-control centre, where call handlers hesitated to ask eligibility questions for fear of making incorrect judgements. Therefore, it is important to engage with call handlers when implementing EVR to help build confidence in the process and ensure they are empowered to make decisions in line with EVR protocols.
- The ability for victims to opt in for EVR depends on how call takers grade incidents. It is important to ensure that incident grading is consistent across the force and in line with force policies.
- Offering victims a choice in the service they receive is a key contributor to the increased positive perceptions of the police. Therefore, allowing victims a choice of response options (that includes EVR) is crucial to achieving similar improvements in victim satisfaction.
- The importance of having a dedicated space where EVR officers were based was noticed. This is because a shared space helps realise the benefits of double crewing but with the efficiency of attending incidents individually. Additionally, to enhance the benefits of co-location, forces should

consider forming an EVR team which includes a mix of experienced officers who can easily adapt to virtual work and more junior staff. This can create a supportive environment for experienced officers to share their learning, helping junior officers develop sound decision-making skills.

- To maximise the benefits of EVR, officers should be posted to an EVR team on a long-term basis and should not be given EVR duties for singular shifts.
- EVR is a desk-based role that will not appeal to all frontline officers. Forcing this method of working on officers who would rather work in a more traditional in-person response environment can have negative consequences. It is recommended that officers are recruited to the EVR team on a voluntary basis.
- Encouraging officers to take regular breaks from the screen was identified as key to ensuring that the EVR team remains productive throughout the entire shift.
- Using non-deployable officers in the EVR should be considered. The nature of the work undertaken in the EVR involves regular contact with the public and requires the use of policing skills, unlike some more traditional admin-based roles police officers are placed in when they are non-deployable. This proved beneficial in allowing officers to maintain policing skills, as well as building confidence after a period of long-term absence ahead of a return to full duties.
- A continuous feedback loop should be created during the early stages of an EVR rollout. It is essential that officers tasked with delivering the service to the public have a clear route to escalate issues they identify to enable them to be resolved promptly.

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Tags

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