

Digital asset management system (DAMS) to handle and store digital evidence

Implementing a digital asset management system (DAMS) to handle and store digital evidence such as CCTV, body worn video footage and doorbell camera recording to improve the quality of investigations.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Organisational
Topic	Digital, data and analytics Investigation
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Key details

Partners	Police Business and commerce Community safety partnership Criminal justice (includes prisons, probation services) Government department Health services Local authority Private sector
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	December 0021
Scale of initiative	National
Target group	Communities General public Offenders Victims Workforce

Aim

The aim is to:

- procure a single DAMS for Kent Police and Essex Police, with the option for additional interfaces, drones and dashcams, as part of the core delivery, this includes digital interview recording (DIR) software
- provide ingestion and management of multi-media digital case file material, including large data files, relevant to an investigation or case, this includes functionality to allow for third party uploads and integrations from other systems

- ensure all digital assets can be stored, managed, and shared with external parties, including criminal justice partners
- be compliant with legal requirements and in line with national standards

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes are to:

- increase the retention and storage of all digital evidence resulting in improved compliance with legislation
- increase capacity by reducing the amount of time taken to retrieve CCTV footage and costs of travel
- increase efficiency through the reduction in media storage administration
- improve standard of case files, investigation quality and timeliness
- reduce the costs of disposing of digital media
- reduce the number of seizures of victim and witness mobile phones
- reduce the risk of data breaches for lost or incorrectly retained digital evidence
- rationalise IT application such as Egress and Siraview

Description

In 2018, Kent Police began a process of designing and building a DAMS product with an external supplier. During the designing process, it became apparent that this was not suitable for delivering an effective DAMS in the changing world of digital evidence. In 2020, Kent Police and Essex Police DAMS team identified that other products should be explored that would meet the requirements of managing and storing digital evidence. The DAMS team undertook a trial with Axon DAMS products to identify if the software would meet the needs of both forces and deliver on the DAMS objectives. The trial informed the business case, which was approved by the chief officers in both forces.

Planning process

The initiative required governance structure, jointly led by the criminal justice chief superintendent and superintendent from both forces. The leads are responsible for the business and operational requirements. The DAMS senior users chaired a DAMS delivery board which included internal stakeholders. A separate a DAMS strategic board with heads of department from across both

forces was held to discuss the procurement process.

The purpose of the procurement process was to identify and implement contractual terms with the forces' existing frameworks. A no cost proof of concept test of the Axon DAMS was developed to assess the product's functionality. Kent Police and Essex Police already used Axon for their body worn video (BWV) materials, enabling them to have a basic understanding of what the product offered. The review looked at identifying benefits and user and non-functional requirements.

The DAMS strategic board decided on roles user access. During this process, it was identified that a dedicated team was required to manage DAMS post implementation. The board also developed a training plan of five e-learning modules which were developed to support implementation.

Roles and teams

The following roles and teams were involved in the development of DAMS:

- IT senior project manager
- head of IT portfolio and business engagement
- Kent Police and Essex Police DAMS programme manager – business lead
- DAMS senior users – Kent Police and Essex police criminal justice leads
- IT commercial applications team
- information security team
- data protection team
- digital forensics team leader
- IT technical solutions architect
- IT helpdesk
- IT access management team
- corporate communications team
- records management team
- operational policing representatives for all policing departments
- digital imaging and crime scene investigators
- public disclosure team
- criminal justice unit
- traffic process teams
- chief officers

- procurement teams
- custody Team
- property team
- business services
- DAMS team

- DAMS product owner
- DAMS system manager
- two police constable tactical advisors

Implementation

In September 2022, Kent Police and Essex Police implemented Axon Evidence DAMS, which included:

- process mapping existing digital evidence and new processes with the relevant teams
- the ability for the public, councils and businesses to upload digital evidence via a text or email link
- redaction tools to clip, crop, stitch and bulk redact CCTV
- ability to share with internal and external partners
- auto transcription
- an interactive map which enables investigating officers to see CCTV camera locations registered by the public, councils or retailers
- integration of existing policing systems such as GoodSAM, STORM, 999 and 101 systems
- digital interview recording and ingestion of suspect and victim interviews into DAMS
- auto ingesting of body-worn video (BWV) footage

The implementation process also involved:

- creating retention policy approved by the chief officers
- engaging with suppliers to ensure contractual pre delivery requirements were achieved, specifically in relation to new functionality to mandate users entering reference and retention information
- creating DAMS ambassadors for each key area of business, the purpose of the ambassadors is for them to be 'super users' supporting the design and implementation process, a regular meeting is held to engage with all the DAMS ambassadors

- creating a DAMS SharePoint page to host guidance and reference materials to support implementation
- creating a DAMS Yammer (Viva engage) channel for users to raise queries and issues directly with the DAMS team

Overall impact

- DAMS has been positively received in both forces, who have welcomed the software as being user friendly and supporting how they carry out their role on a day-to-day basis.
- The business processes that the DAMS team devised through working with the supplier means that officers and staff no longer need to collect digital evidence in person. DAMS provides the functionality to enable officers and staff to send a link via email or text to a member of the public or business for them to upload their digital evidence. This has been estimated to have saved approximately 614,000 hours of officer and staff time, enabling officers to reinvest the time they would have spent collecting and managing digital evidence into other areas of operational policing.
- The integration of existing policing systems has enabled officers to reduce the amount of time spent accessing and moving footage between various systems. The implementation of digital interview recording has increased efficiency and managing of workloads for officers in Kent Police.
- The Kent and Essex Digital Forensics team have seen a reduction in their workload by 87%, enabling the team to implement a new efficient working model. The team can now focus on the most serious and complex cases, where their involvement is critical to the outcome of the case.

In February 2025, both forces carried out a DAMS user survey. The survey collected 369 responses, with 80% of respondents rating DAMS an eight out of ten or higher. The survey found:

- 91% rated DAMS as user friendly
- 90% said they felt the training gave them sufficient knowledge prior to launch and those that said no reported that it was too detailed as the system is so user intuitive
- 95% said DAMS has enabled them to carry out their role more effectively and efficiently
- 90% said DAMS has improved the timeliness and quality of investigations

Learning

- Collaborative working – it is essential to have collaborative working across teams and forces. By engaging with IT and business leads at the earliest opportunity, the forces were able to develop DAMS with end users in mind.
- Data and retention – effective data management and retention policies have been important to the development of DAMS. The retention policy has been key to ensuring that risk to storage utilisation and legislative compliance are minimised.
- Axon partnership – both forces have continued to work with Axon to ensure they get the most out of the software and encourage continuous development.
- User requirements – user and key business requirements should be included in the contract. It is also important to speak to other forces about what software is being used and their own requirements.
- It is recommended that when implementing DAMS that there is a central team to manage pre and post implementation. By road mapping the process, forces can maximise value for money and continued benefits post implementation.

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