

Fact Sheet 5

BODY WORN VIDEO

What is Body Worn Video?

Body Worn Video (BWV) is a wearable device that can record audio and video. BWV devices come in a range of physical and technical designs, but ultimately perform the same basic functions. It is most commonly worn across the chest or mounted on a helmet.



BWV trialled in North East Division

Although BWV is best known for its use in policing, it is also used in sports and recreation, firefighting and retail and is increasingly applied in a healthcare setting.

Why use Body Worn Video for policing?

Police Services have, for several decades, utilised video evidence through local CCTV, police vehicle systems and hand-held devices employed during specific operations. In the UK, the police use of BWV commenced with small-scale tests of a head-mounted video system in Plymouth (Devon and Cornwall Constabulary) in 2006. The system was recognised to significantly improve the quality of the evidence provided by

Purpose

The Strategic Police Plan commits to the provision of Policing for a safe, protected and resilient Scotland. This requires designing and maintaining services which meet rising and evolving demands in a constantly changing environment. To meet these demands now and in the future Scotland's police service must adapt and proportionately adopt the necessary technologies which will enable them to protect the safety and wellbeing of our communities (as outlined in the Policing Principles - Section 32 of Police and Fire Reform Act 2012).

This series of public focused and user-friendly factsheets has been developed to provide an overview of the benefits of emerging technology and upcoming developments within policing, the policies that will govern them, and the ethical, privacy and human rights implications.

police officers at incidents. Today, BWV devices are implemented by every police force in the UK.

BWV creates a video and audio recording of an incident. The position of the camera means those watching the footage see the situation from the officer's perspective. The camera acts as an independent witness, showing what a police officer would have seen, heard, said and did.

Why use Body Worn Video in armed policing?

BWV provides several major benefits for armed police officers given the specialist and potentially life-critical nature of their work. BWV increases the transparency of policing and any footage recorded can be subsequently reviewed, scrutinised and submitted as evidence, making officers, as well as offenders, more accountable.

A major advantage of BWV is the provision of increased evidential quality. Traditionally, a police officer will make a written record of an incident, including language and gestures that were used, as soon as possible after the incident occurs. Using BWV, the incident is recorded in real time and as precisely as possible, limited only by the field of view and audio range of the device.

The evidence is therefore far more accurate and detailed than was previously possible - doubts as to what was done or said by any person present can be minimised. There are many potential benefits of BWV devices, as highlighted in the data box on the following page.

BWV footage has similarly been used to resolve complaints made against police officers by members of the public. This reduces investigative time and provides an accurate record of the situation. There is also evidence to suggest that the conduct and behaviour of both the public and officers is improved when BWV is in use.

Police Scotland implementation and use of the technology

BWV is currently used to a limited extent by Police Scotland, primarily in the North East of the country. Police Officers and Special Constables from the North East Division have used BWV since June 2010. This began with a pilot for the use of BWV in a designated area within legacy Grampian Police.



Police Scotland officer with BWV

The pilot showed that BWV offered significant business benefits including evidence gathering, enhanced prosecution evidence and use in the event of a complaint against the Police. This resulted in greater uptake of BWV device use across the region. Today, there are just over 250 BWV devices in the North East.

Police Scotland are currently progressing a targeted roll-out of BWV to armed police officers before the COP26 conference that will take place in Glasgow in November 2021. Armed policing is an area of high risk; scrutiny and the roll out of BWV will help improve transparency and accountability.

Benefits of BWV in armed policing

- Greater transparency of policing, in particular where armed officers are deployed to an incident
- Provides valuable evidence to assist police officers in the investigation of crime
- Supports victims by capturing evidence, providing a visual record of scenes, documenting injuries and showing the distress suffered by victims of crime,
- Provided the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service with high quality evidence to support investigations and prosecutions
- Supporting investigations by Police Scotland and the Police Investigations and Review Commissioner (PIRC) in respect of investigations concerning the policing response to a particular matter.

The use of BWV will not be a replacement for traditional policing techniques and Officers will continue to gather and record evidence by conventional means such as taking statements from members of the public or eyewitnesses.

The use of BWV is incident specific; unless they are part of a specific operation, officers won't be recording as part of normal patrolling.

Officers activate their cameras at the start of an incident or encounter, and under normal circumstances will continue to record until it's no longer 'proportionate or necessary'. Where practical, an officer will make people aware that they are using the BWV device to record.

What safeguards are in place?

Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority (SPA) acknowledges that whilst there is a strong evidential base indicating the benefits of BWV, there are recognised privacy, data and third-party concerns. The introduction of new and emerging technologies such as BWV must be balanced against the police values of integrity, fairness, respect and human rights.

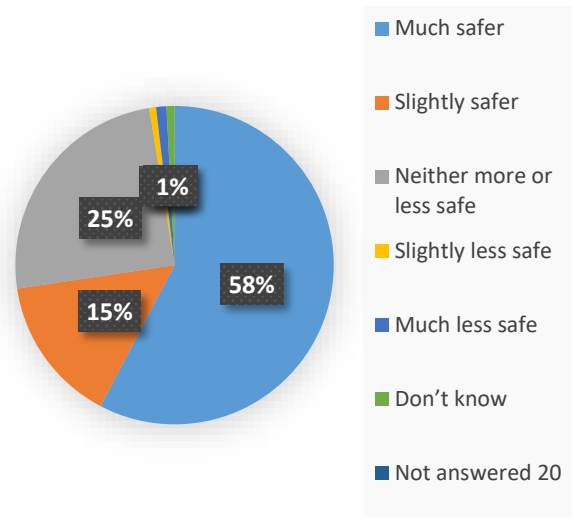
Police Scotland are committed to policing by consent and will only use BWV for legitimate policing purpose, where it is considered necessary and appropriate to do so. BWV will not be used in covert surveillance and devices will never be intentionally hidden when in use.

To understand and mitigate against potential privacy and third-party concerns, Police Scotland had completed a full Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EqHRIA), and Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA). Impact assessments are reviewed and updated annually to reflect changes in legislation, policy and technology.

Furthermore, armed police officers will be provided with standardised training on the use of BWV and will be issued with a code of practice and associated standard operating procedures (SOPs) detailing how BWV should be used during their duties.

Following each deployment, evidential footage is burned to disc and lodged as a production. Footage not marked as required for evidential use is automatically deleted after a specified period, currently set at 31 days. Police Scotland and the SPA commit to monitoring benefits realisation from BWV and to reporting through existing governance structures, ensuring transparency and accountability.

If a police officer decided to use a body worn camera during an interaction, would this make you feel more or less safe?

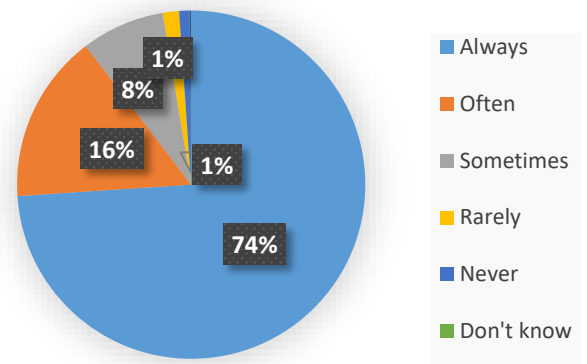


Assurance for citizens

An online survey, which opened for three weeks from February 1 2021, asked members of the public for their opinions on the deployment of BWV in Scottish policing for the future. There was a high uptake to this survey, with 8,835 people responding. The survey results showed strong support for the use of BWV in policing, with 72% saying they would feel much or slightly safer with officers using BWV, and 90% saying that BWV should be used often or in all situations.

These views provided support for the decision by Police Scotland and the SPA to go ahead with rolling out BWV.

How frequently, if at all, do you think it would be appropriate for the police to record interactions using a body worn camera?



Looking Forward

In the longer term and subject to finance being made available, Police Scotland intend to roll out BWV to all frontline police officers and staff as quickly as funding will allow. With over 17,000 officers, this will be a major undertaking and will require significant planning and investment. Wide public engagement and communication will be carried out as part of this roll out ensuring that as many people as possible provide their views and to ensure that people are aware of how BWV will be used within their local policing.

Although the addition of BWV in policing brings numerous benefits it is recognised that some individuals may have concerns about the use of such technology. The roll out of BWV across Police Scotland will be carefully considered by the SPA and the views of the public and key experts sought.

Further reading

Police Scotland's current status and future considerations in relation to Police Scotland's [body worn video roll out](#).

University of Cambridge, Institute of Criminology [research into the use of body worn video cameras](#).

Keeping up to date

To keep up to date with our work, please keep an eye on the SPA's [website](#) where you can find papers and watch livestream committee discussions, and follow us on Twitter:

@ScotPolAuth @policescotland

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