



Update from Surrey Police Chief Constable Lynne Owens



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In previous bulletins I've written about technology and how we are using it to better equip officers on the street with information to make them more effective and more efficient. Officers can now search police databases over their phone and record the details of crimes and witness statements directly into our systems whilst on the street rather than heading back to the office then having to type up written notes. This might not sound ground-breaking but Surrey is leading the country in this.

Technology is changing policing in so many ways that, unusually, I want to dedicate most of this bulletin to writing about what one particular development, body worn 'video' cameras could mean for Surrey.

Lynne Owens

What are body worn cameras?

They come in a range of shapes and sizes but put simply they are clip on cameras that are worn overtly on officers' uniform. They record video and audio. Most models allow officers to turn them on and off when they are needed, such as when responding to an incident rather than running routinely whilst they patrol.

Surrey Police was involved in a pilot of one type of these cameras with Neighbourhood Teams in Reigate and Banstead 2012 SNT. Since then there have been a number of national trials (including in London, Hampshire and Sussex) and Surrey Police has been waiting for the conclusion of these before taking a decision on whether they will be introduced across the Force.

The national College of Policing is evaluating the various trials and I'm looking forward to seeing the results shortly. They should give an assessment about what sort of cameras are most effective and offer best value for money, and in what circumstances are there the biggest advantages in using them, and are there any downsides.

So what are the benefits?

The main purpose of the cameras is to capture evidence. This is wide reaching but could be officers called to break up a fight on a street (the cameras could capture who was involved and what they were doing), recording the initial scenes as officers respond to a domestic abuse case (where the distress to the victim, their injuries and any damage to their home can be recorded to help support their and any victim accounts).

This evidence can help prove or disprove a suspect's involvement, then assist in speeding up the justice process through early guilty pleas, or, if disputed, support victim and witness statements. This has the benefit of reducing the impact on victims and witnesses and making justice more effective. Which in turn means less officer time is needed in interviews and in court, making them more available to police local areas and to investigate other crimes.

Another benefit relates to accountability and transparency. The cameras will show accurate records of encounters showing what was said and done by both our staff and suspects, helping to mitigate false allegations against officers, or be used to hold them to account if their behaviour falls below the standards expected. Cameras may also deter offenders from being abusive or violent to our staff.

And any concerns?

The battery life of cameras mean they won't be running permanently so whilst we can have a policy about when they will record or not it will be down to officers to turn them on at the right point – what happens if an officer doesn't or isn't able to turn it on for operational or technical reasons – will the public suspect bad intent or a cover up from police? Does this undermine public confidence?

Would it be seen as an intrusion into people's privacy? We currently have CCTV on lots of our streets, but if officers are recording when they enter people's homes or getting close to people on the streets is that any different and if so does the public have any concerns about this and are there ways to address them?

Are there any issues about innocent bystanders caught on camera and their images being stored for a set period of time until any non-evidential footage is destroyed?

We can't, nor should we store all footage indefinitely. What happens if it is destroyed when it reaches the 31 day time limit then at a later point the footage is requested for a historic crime? Would there then be concern and criticism about the routine deletion of older material?

Despite only keeping data for a limited period any digital "video" recording uses up a lot of data and there is a cost to storing it – is this good value for money?

Should young people be treated differently from adults – should there be a minimum age for being recorded and what happens if the child looks older than they are?

We currently have officers from our surrounding forces using body worn cameras (including when they come into Surrey), and some local authority enforcement staff use it in the county too, so if it is already being used does it matter if we extend it to our officers?

Given that members of the public increasingly record each other, as well as officers, on their mobile phones would officers doing it be viewed differently?

I am proud to be a British police officer relying on the consent of the public in our largely unarmed endeavours. It seems to me that the roll out of technology could fundamentally alter that relationship, which is why I am keen to seek views before making a recommendation to the Police and Crime Commissioner.

As you can see there are lots of complex considerations and I really want to start a public debate in the county on these issues. Do the benefits in helping us keep people safe and pursue criminals outweigh all of these concerns and considerations? What are your views on this and the above issues? Have I missed anything off that you think is a major issue we need to consider?

I would really appreciate you dropping us your thoughts by emailing campaigns@surrey.pnn.police.uk or tweeting us @SurreyPolice. I look forward to hearing your opinions and hope to feedback on them in my next bulletin.

Operational Successes

To move on now to one of my favourite parts of this bulletin, which is to demonstrate how we have been keeping Surrey safe this month.

- A 41-year-old Woking man has been sentenced to ten months imprisonment after admitting dangerous driving and four counts of driving whilst disqualified. Luis Martins of Frailey Hill appeared at Guildford Crown Court following an incident in which he failed to stop his car for police on routine patrol in Woking in March this year.
 - A Redhill man has been sentenced to 30 months imprisonment after pleading guilty to robbing a man earlier this year. Dene Fredrick Searle, 22, of Timperley Gardens appeared at Guildford Crown Court after admitting the offence. It is believed Seale lured his victim, a man in his 20s, back to his home after befriending him in a Redhill pub. It was here where Searle assaulted the man who suffered cuts and bruising to his face and torso before his headphones, £50 cash and a sports bag containing personal items were stolen. Searle was given a 21 month sentence for robbery and a 9 month sentence for assault (ABH) to run consecutively.
 - 46 people have been charged in the first three weeks of Surrey Police's crackdown on drink or drug-driving related offences. The Force, jointly with Drive Smart in Surrey, Sussex Police, the Sussex Safer Roads Partnership, and the independent charity Crimestoppers started the campaign on June 1. To raise awareness and act a deterrent the Force has been proactively releasing the names of those who have been charged, while officers are Tweeting about when people have been stopped on suspicion of drink or drug-driving offences, giving brief details such as when, where and why the motorists were pulled over.
 - A 36-year-old woman from Guildford has been sentenced to 14 months' imprisonment suspended for two years after admitting five offences, including one count of wilfully pretending to be a barrister contrary to the Legal Services Act 2007. Monika Juneja, of Doverfield Road, Guildford also pleaded guilty at a hearing at the Old Bailey last month (11 May) to three offences contrary to the Forgery and Counterfeiting Act 1981 and one count of pecuniary advantage contrary to the Theft Act 1968. She was also ordered to carry out 200 hours of community service.
 - A man has been arrested in connection with a series of sexual assaults which occurred at Frimley Park Hospital. An investigation started last year, in conjunction with Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust, after officers received a report of a sexual assault having taken place in November. Since the initial allegation officers have received further reports which are being investigated. A man in his 50s has been arrested on suspicion of
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sexual assault and has been released on bail until September 21 pending further inquiries.

- A man has been charged in connection with two bank robberies in Reigate and Guildford. On both occasions a man is alleged to have entered the bank and demanded money whilst in possession of a suspected firearm. Paul Williams, 49, of Stockton Road, Reigate has been charged with robbery, attempted robbery and possession of an imitation firearm with intent to commit an indictable offence.

Key diary dates

National Armed Forces Day: Guildford plays host for the county to mark this event on Saturday 27 June 2015

For details of Neighbourhood Panel meetings, Police Surgeries and 'Meet the Beat' sessions in your neighbourhood, visit our [website](#)

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