

RY - Bexley Borough
RY - Bexleyheath Police Station

Bexleyheath Police Station
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www.met.police.uk

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Dear **(Insert name of stakeholder)**

I am writing to let you know that Bexley Borough has been selected to take part in the Metropolitan Police Service's pilot of body worn video (BWV) equipment. You may have seen some debate and publicity around the use of these cameras in recent months. Our Borough will be taking part in the largest urban trial of this technology in the world to date.

I think it is therefore essential to inform you as to what the pilot will look like locally. As always, I would be keen to hear feedback, so I would be grateful if you could cascade this information as you see fit.

Below I have listed some 'Frequently asked questions' in respect of the cameras, and I hope they will prove informative.

Which officers are using BWV?

Front line emergency response officers from two teams on this Borough will be using the cameras, as well as armed response officers from the MPS Firearms command, who may be deployed on the Borough from time to time on patrol or in response to incidents.

The reason only two teams are being issued with the cameras at the moment is because we would like to assess how productivity and performance is affected by the teams using the cameras as opposed to those teams without them. By having teams on the same Borough with and without cameras, this is the most efficient way of ensuring that other local factors remain the same.

Why use BWV at all?

BWV provides an additional option for officers to gather evidence at incidents.

BWV cameras have already been used in the MPS and in other forces to good effect. The cameras can capture evidence of criminal behaviour and can help to 'set the scene' for the court at a later date.

By capturing this evidence, officers can spend less time writing statements and completing paperwork at the station. This allows them to spend more time patrolling and responding to incidents in the community.

The use of BWV in other countries has been shown to moderate the behaviour of people present at incidents, resulting in less of force by officers and reduced complaints against police. It is hoped this will help to ensure public confidence in police actions.

Evidence from other forces in the UK has shown that, where BWV is key evidence, guilty pleas at the first opportunity at court rise significantly - this means reduced burdens across the Criminal Justice System, not just in policing.

When will officers be using the BWV? Will it be 'always on?'

No - the use of BWV will be 'incident specific' - officers will switch on the camera when they would ordinarily be considering recording an incident or interaction by conventional means - for example, a statement or notebook entry - or if they feel that there would be evidential value in recording the incident.

Officers will, when practicable, tell those present when they are recording and when they are about to switch off the camera. They will usually only switch the camera off when the incident has concluded or where there is no further evidential value to be had in continued recording.

To have the cameras 'always on' may result in private or confidential interactions with the public being recorded and also may represent a significant intrusion into the privacy of those who might be caught on camera.

As well as this, continual recording will result in massive amounts of data being retained and stored by the police, which would result in increased logistical problems in back office functions.

What is the pilot going to measure? How long will it last?

At this stage the pilot is expected to last for the next financial year.

The pilot will be measuring a number of outcomes including: criminal justice outcomes, complaints against police, use of force by police, amount of time saved in administration tasks and the impact on public confidence through the use of cameras.

The pilot will compare the performance of those officers issued with the cameras against those without cameras. It is hoped that the pilot will be able to demonstrate improvements in these key areas.

How does the BWV work?

The BWV camera is a video and audio recording device. Depending on the model, the device is either mounted on the body or worn on a head mounting.

The camera records footage onto an internal and secure hard drive. Footage recorded can then be uploaded to MPS servers for use as evidence at court or other proceedings.

What about rights to privacy?

It is understandable that some people may be concerned about officer's recording their interactions with the public at incidents. They may be worried that footage concerning them may be held on police data servers.

This is a key reason why officers will not indiscriminately record all interactions and activity. This is to ensure that any intrusion into private lives is kept to the minimum level necessary.

All footage recorded on BWV in the MPS is subject to legal safeguards and guidance set by the Information Commissioner's office and the Home Office.

Footage that is not likely to be of evidential value will be removed from the system within a very short time - the current guidance is within 31 days.

Footage that is retained is subject to regular review and, if no longer required or likely to be required as evidence, will again be weeded.

People who have been recorded have the right to see footage of them that has been retained by the MPS. See our website - www.met.police.uk for details on how to obtain this footage.

How do I give feedback or find out more?

A key consideration for the MPS pilot is to gauge feedback from the public and London's communities about their feelings around BWV.

You can give your feedback and/or comments to your local Safer Neighbourhoods Team or you can find out how to give feedback to the MPS at www.met.police.uk

I hope that this letter answers some of the questions that you may have around BWV on our Borough. I will be keeping a close eye on the project and am more than happy to feed back any concerns, suggestions or issues - both positive or negative, that you may have about the use of this new technology to the central project team who will be evaluating the pilot across London.

Yours sincerely,

Chief Supt Peter Ayling

Borough Commander