

Community-centric Policing

Wiltshire Police officers use Intel® technology-powered devices to escape their desks and work among the community



Covering 3,400km² in the South West of England, the county of Wiltshire is home to 684,000 people and contains the historic city of Salisbury as well as the UNESCO World Heritage site of Stonehenge and Avebury. In a predominantly rural region, Wiltshire Council is committed to increasing staff mobility by providing access to technology that doesn't tie employees to their desks. For the county's police force, this means keeping officers immersed in the community, providing a visible police presence while enabling collaboration and efficient working practices. The council and the police force are working together to demonstrate the transformative effect that technology innovation can have on local government and policing.

Challenges

- **Boost visibility.** Enable officers to spend more time out in the community and less in the station
- **Increase connectivity.** Provide officers with access to all mission-critical systems, even when they are on the move
- **Cross-organizational collaboration.** Create stronger alignment between police and other Council departments

Solutions

- **Mobile computing.** Give officers and back-office staff members Dell* laptops and 2 in 1 devices powered by Intel® Core™ i5 processors
- **Connected anywhere.** Each device is equipped with 3G connectivity and access to all systems
- **Increased efficiencies.** Digital signature pads can be used with the devices to enable citizen statements to be taken and submitted on the spot

Impact

- **Greater efficiency.** Officers save time by using their downtime during shifts to complete paperwork and carry out research in the field
- **Stronger collaboration.** Teams within the police force and across Council departments can work together more effectively by sharing information or holding meetings online
- **More visible.** Citizens have commented positively on the more visible police presence



“We're very proud of this project and the benefits it's bringing to the citizens of Wiltshire. Over time, we'll be looking at new technologies, starting with Intel® RealSense™ technology, to identify more opportunities to deliver on our commitment to community-centric policing.”

Jon Ashworth
Strategic Technical Lead,
Wiltshire Police



County police force empowers officers to work from within the community using Intel® technology-powered devices

“Gone are the days when a police surveillance team out in the field was unable to keep up with their other cases. The agile, mobile solution we have in place now means there’s minimal downtime for our staff.”

*Kier Pritchard
Assistant Chief Constable,
Wiltshire Police*

Creating connections for pop-up policing

The officers and staff of Wiltshire Police are no strangers to the advantages technology can bring to the workday routine. For example, they frequently use virtual collaboration software such as Microsoft Lync® to hold meetings with colleagues at different sites. However, their use of such solutions, and their ability to access mission-critical systems, has been hampered as employees needed to be in the office and in front of a desktop PC to use them. With increasing demand for a visible police presence in the community, being tied to their desks in this way was no longer an option.

The police force has given officers and back-office staff access to Dell laptops and 2 in 1 devices, all powered by Intel Core i5 processors. Council employees were also equipped with the same devices, creating consistency across both organizations and laying the foundations for simpler collaboration. In a recent survey¹, 73 percent of the officers issued with one of the devices said they used it every day while out in the field.

The devices, once installed in a charging dock in each police vehicle, provide officers with access to every system they need to do their jobs – from NICHE*, the core police records management system, to the Storm* command-and-control platform, through to Lync and the force's HR and appraisal software. 3G connectivity means officers can use these essential tools anywhere, eliminating the need to return to the station to join meetings, check records or file updates on a case. Now they can log in from the passenger seat of a patrol car, the local library, or a domestic address. They can even create a pop-up police station in a coffee shop or town square and work from there. One detective constable found this remote connectivity particularly useful when he and some colleagues attended the trial of suspects involved in a long-running investigation. “The ability to access all the files for the entire investigation while at court proved to be invaluable,” he said. “A great deal of the information, especially the fine details that come out only when in court, could be confirmed direct from the case files. Like so many of our operations, a number of months had passed from the strike day, so

having direct access was very beneficial. It also meant that we didn't have to transport numerous paper files to court with the associated issues of security and storage, nor did we need a colleague at the end of the phone in the office attempting to access files for us. It meant we had immediate, secure and accurate access at a touch of a button.”

Security is a priority for the police force. Officers frequently need to access or share sensitive or confidential information, which must be stored safely. The introduction of the devices means all records can now be fully digitized and encrypted, so filing cabinets filled with paper files that can be lost through fire or theft are no longer needed. As the systems and applications accessed through the devices are all cloud-based, no data is stored on the devices themselves, which are Microsoft Direct Access* CEGS-approved, and can be disabled remotely if they are lost or stolen. As a result, officers no longer have to worry about mislaying files while they are out of the office.

Working smarter within the community

With greater mobility and security, the officers have also found they are able to work much more efficiently than before. Having access to all systems all the time means they can make better use of their downtime to carry out administrative tasks and complete work quicker. One inspector reported that he has been able to save about 10 hours per week, while another said: “I'm able to set up the device in my car and work without returning to the office. For large jobs, I can call up all the information I need and conduct enquiries without having to waste the command-and-control team's time.”

The devices also enable officers to share information in a variety of formats much more quickly and accurately than before. For example, a detective constable was reviewing some CCTV footage for a clear image of a suspect. With his new device, he was able to freeze the images, cut out the image he needed, and email it to himself. He said: “On the face of it, this would appear to be a simple task. But previously we had to print screen and paste the whole screen image into a Microsoft Word* document, then

crop the image. Even this did not always work. And there have been occasions where officers have had to physically drive a disc to headquarters to get an image processed. The simple ability to cut images from stills and get them circulated will save significant time and money." The devices have helped keep officers out in the field in emergency situations as well. "I was away from the station when a report came in of a domestic assault and a male who had access to firearms," said a tri-force sergeant. "I was able to use my tablet to see where my resources were and to contact colleagues to assist. Without the tablet, I would have needed to go to a station."

Meanwhile, other teams were able to boost efficiency by adding accessories. For example, a number of officers have used their devices to capture witness or victim statements and then add a digital signature pad to allow the statement to be signed and filed immediately. "Previously, if someone had experienced or witnessed a crime, the officer would go to the scene to take down their statement by hand," explained Jon Ashworth, senior strategic technical lead at Wiltshire Police. "He or she would then need to travel back to the station to type it up, and then go back to the person who had provided the statement to get them to sign it. They would then have to go back to the station again with the signed document to scan it and upload it to NICHE. Now, they can put the statement straight into the system using their laptop, and then just get the victim or witness to sign it then and there using the digital pad. In this way, the officer creates, uploads and saves a signed, legally permissible document in an hour rather than taking most of the day. This is great for the officer, but also creates a much faster and less stressful experience for the person giving the statement."

Fostering a collaborative culture

The officers using the devices have found they enhance teamwork as well as supporting individual tasks. Using Bluetooth* headsets, they are able to hold calls over Microsoft Lync while on the road, enabling them to keep in touch with colleagues in the office and stay up to date

on developments in current cases. "During one live enquiry, we were executing a warrant on a cannabis factory and I was able to Lync with my colleague in the office to have a real-time conversation," said one detective sergeant (DS) in the Criminal Investigation Department (CID). "In a major enquiry, the ability to share live images from a crime scene can be invaluable."

At the same time, team leaders have found they no longer need to ask everyone to be in the same office for meetings. A team leader in the specialist crime department said: "This has dramatically reduced travel times. It has also helped us reduce paper use, as agendas can be shared electronically. The video facility allows the meetings to be far more personable than a conference call. It allows more face-to-face contact without having to be in the same room, which improves relationships."

Officers can also use the devices to call in expert advice when needed. For example, the same CID DS was called to investigate some bones being uncovered in a household garden. When he called the station to request support from a forensic archaeologist, he was told she was out of the country working on a case. Instead of waiting for her to return to the UK days later, the DS was able to email her some images directly from the scene and receive her expert opinion within hours. "This meant that instead of having to consider calling out staff for cordons and scene preservation, I could make an informed decision in quick time," he explained. The expert was able to quickly identify the bones as animal and therefore save the significant cost that can be associated with closing off a suspected crime scene.

The devices offer huge potential for collaboration. Ashworth and his team are already investigating the possibility of using the universal system access and always-on connectivity to enable officers to work more closely with council employees and colleagues within other organizations such as social care or the fire service. "We have access to a lot of data, and so do these other organizations," Ashworth said. "By combining our insights, we can build a single view of the customer for individuals within the community, which would help us provide citizens with a richer, more cohesive service."

Lessons Learned

Introducing transformative technology is a priority for many government organizations. Wiltshire Police and Wiltshire Council realized that the technology alone is not enough though, and took proactive steps to monitor usage models and gather feedback from the officers in the field. It was as a result of this user input that enhancements – such as the addition of 3G connectivity and digital signature pads – were added to the devices, ensuring they fit with how the officers want to use them.

Enhancing the working day

"When we deployed the devices, we felt it was important to let the officers decide how they wanted to use them," said Ashworth. "Rather than issue strict schedules telling them when they should be at the station and where they should use the devices, we asked them to set their own priorities. We wanted to challenge the traditional police culture of dropping into a crime scene and then going back to the station. Instead we wanted to encourage policing from within the community itself." As a result, 96 percent of officers reported in a recent internal survey that the devices have improved their way of working.

The specialist crime department team leader explained another benefit to his officers' work life: "I have a number of part-time staff in one of my teams. They would like to work full time but have responsibilities that mean they cannot commit to being in a police station for their whole shift. As a result, they work reduced hours, which has a negative impact on them and the organization. We are exploring the opportunities to use laptops to ensure they can work full time while allowing them the flexibility to fit their working day around their other responsibilities. This has a financial benefit to them and allows us to ensure work volumes are equally maintained and the service receives improved value for money from them." Another officer, currently on a recuperative plan and unable

to work in the office, added: "The laptop has allowed me to have a role within my department where I can still perform useful tasks. It has given me the option to be able to work at home or in the office, without the pressure associated with an office environment. This has helped me continue to work without needing to resort to sick leave."

Kier Pritchard, assistant chief constable at Wiltshire Police, sees this flexible working pattern as important to maintaining morale and retaining talent. "Obviously we need to keep up a highly visible policing presence within the community, but we want to offer our staff a good work-life balance. With this in mind, and following the success of the devices being issued to cars for patrol, we've now decided to personally issue laptops to more than 2,000 staff and officers, truly mobilizing the force as we continue to innovate and use technology to work even smarter. This means they can fit in their paperwork and admin tasks around home commitments. Many also really like being able to catch up on case updates before coming in for a shift."

Visible policing achieved

Like Ashworth, the team involved in the project at Wiltshire Council have been pleased with the results. Julie Anderson-Hill, head of

transformational change at Wiltshire Council, said: "People have asked us, 'Where have you got all these extra police officers from?' We haven't. What we've done is enabled them to use tablets and laptops in a way that's taking their business out into their local communities."

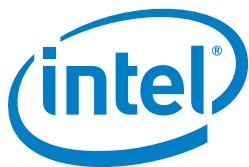
The officers themselves have noticed the increased opportunities to work among the public as well, with 78 percent of them reporting their time spent away from the station has increased since receiving a device. Crime statistics in the area have dropped in the same period, with antisocial behavior in the town of Trowbridge down by 15.8 percent, domestic burglaries cut by 34.1 percent, and vehicle crime down by 33 percent².

"I speak to colleagues in other police forces and they've been impressed with the innovative approach we've taken and the results we've achieved," said Ashworth. "We're very proud of this project and the benefits it's bringing to the citizens of Wiltshire. Over time, we'll be looking at new technologies, starting with Intel® RealSense™ technology, to identify more opportunities to deliver on our commitment to community-centric policing."

Pritchard adds: "We've gone from being in the dark ages, technologically speaking, to now being at the forefront of innovation and the envy of many colleagues in police forces up and down the country. We're already planning

next steps, and will be making the solution central to our new policing strategy. With the mobility and agility it delivers, we'll be able to remove more layers of bureaucracy for citizens and further improve the service we offer, all at an affordable cost."

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¹ Internal survey commissioned and conducted by IT team at Wiltshire Police

² http://www.wiltshiretimes.co.uk/news/11695558.Police_visibility_up_crime_down_in_Trowbridge/

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