

Positive impact for Scotland's police officers equipped with mobile devices

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Credit: University of Abertay Dundee

The introduction of mobile devices for Police Scotland's frontline officers has had a huge impact on safety, wellbeing and public

confidence, according to a study involving Abertay University.

Nearly 11,000 response, community and specialist officers have been equipped with the technology as part of their operational duties. Since the rollout in 2019, officers are now able to spend more time in the communities they serve, conducting patrols and focussing on crime prevention.

Academic research commissioned by Police Scotland and supported by technology partner Motorola Solutions, also found that mobile working has enhanced proactive policing, increased visibility and boosted morale.

Carried out by Abertay and Robert Gordon Universities over a 14-month period, the researchers interviewed 68 officers and staff across five divisions as well as conducting observation and analysis. The report findings will be presented publicly for the first time at the Scottish Police Authority (SPA) Resources Committee on Friday December 18.

Researchers explored themes including; officer safety and wellbeing, productivity, connectivity and communication, technology and culture change and information.

Officers reported that the technology positively impacted their wellbeing as they were able to be more efficient when on duty meaning they didn't have to spend time at the end of shift completing paperwork. Officers said they felt they were being invested in by being given the kit that is positively changing the way they work.

During the current health crisis, the devices enabled officers to conduct tasks on the go and access daily briefings without having to return to the station. They reported that the devices have given them a greater sense of autonomy because they can access a range of police systems without having to rely on the control room. Officers also said that they could be

on scene quickly by checking their devices for incidents within their area which might not have yet been allocated.

The research found that the technology has helped officers to stay safe thanks to instant access to systems and a sense of connectivity while on duty. This echoes the Chief Constable's commitments to reduce the impact violence has on our officers and staff and to introduce measures to improve their safety.

Assistant Chief Constable—Criminal Justice, Kenny MacDonald said: "The introduction of mobile working has been a great success for our people and the communities of Scotland as it has revolutionised the way our officers work.

"Thanks to their mobile devices, officers are enjoying the benefits of being able to work more efficiently with technology that is enabling them to be more visible and connected within the communities they serve.

"This important research shows that when our officers and staff have the right technology, they feel safe and more supported when discharging their duties, while also improving the service we provide to the public."

Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Justice, Humza Yousaf, said: "Scotland is well served by its police service and it is pleasing to see positive impact the introduction of mobile devices has had on officers and communities. At the outset we wanted officers to be able to access information at their fingertips which in turn would allow them to become more agile and more visible in their areas.

"This study confirms that this is the case and the officers and the communities they serve are getting the best from this new technology."

Dr. Bill Graham, senior lecturer in criminology of Abertay University's Division of Sociology, said: "The rollout of these devices across Police Scotland has been of significant benefit, both to the officers using them and to the general public, who benefit from the extra time available to serve local communities.

"Our research found that officers have positively embraced this secure new technology as a means of working more efficiently, and being able to concentrate more of their time on crime prevention and other priorities.

"We are living in rapidly-changing times, so staying connected and having instant access to data and systems has quickly become a vital part of a modern police officer's toolkit."

Professor Lesley Diack, School of Pharmacy and Life Sciences, Robert Gordon University, said: "At RGU, we take great pride in working with organisations to support the development of innovative products and services, particularly where there's scope to improve the lives of people and communities.

"Supporting the collaborative introduction of this technology is an opportunity to support the [police](#) in the important and challenging role they perform for our society while improving the safety and wellbeing of the communities they serve."

Provided by University of Abertay Dundee

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