

This essay will explore and evaluate the use of body-worn cameras in evidence-based policing. This essay will show how body cameras can assist in domestic violence cases and how they can protect police officers from false allegations from the public. According to Cambridge University (2016), a study showed that almost two thousand police officers wearing a body cameras had found a drop in police complaints. The 93% drop suggests that body cameras are changing the behaviour of the public towards the police. However, it should be noted that although body-worn cameras can sometimes be a benefit to the police force as well as the public, they can also raise concerns about public privacy and the possible misuse of the body camera footage.

Evidence-based policing (EBP) is an information-driven approach to law enforcement. It uses scientific evidence to make decisions and improve end results. EBP includes using data analysis, research and evaluation to guide police and help them make an informed decision. The main goal of EBP is to create effective strategies that will address criminal activity and promote safety within the community (Rogers et al, 2022). One of the main ideas of EBP is the use of research to help decision-making. The police can research many avenues such as academic and data analysis. By using this method, the police can gain a better understanding of crime patterns, and risks and they can create effective strategies for prevention and possible intervention (CIPD, N.D). According to the National Institute of Justice (2018), "EBP involves the conscientious explicit and judicious use of the best available research evidence to inform decisions on policy and practice". Another main point of EBP is the use of data and analysis to calculate possible outcomes of policing strategies. This may include gathering a wide range of data such as statistics, demographic information, and community feedback. By collecting and using this data it can identify areas that may need improving and the police can ensure they are making evidence-based decisions. Evidence-based policing, in the U.K., has many criminology theories to guide the police force. Rational choice, this theory indicates that an individual will make a decision based on rational thought of the cost and the rewards of the crime. This theory indicates that people would not commit a crime if they thought the risk of getting caught outweighed the reward. Routine activity theory indicates that a crime is committed when three things come together, they are, motivation of the criminal, the target and the lack of witnesses or people that may try to stop them from committing the crime. The police force can use this theory to identify high-risk areas where these three factors may come together, for example, a supermarket that's closed overnight and without any staff inside (Selby et al, 2022). Situational crime prevention theory indicates that changing a social environment can prevent crime. This had created some initiatives, for example, the restructuring of some public places to prevent crime (College of Policing, 2023).

Body-worn cameras are small mobile cameras that are worn by police officers. They are intended to be used to record interactions with the general public. The use of cameras has become popular in the last few years as it can also protect the police from false allegations. Body cameras can be used to increase transparency, and accountability and they can reinforce public trust in the police force. The body camera can also provide reliable evidence for any criminal investigations (Ariel et al, 2016). One of the key benefits of body cameras is that they can stop or even calm a situation with the public, for example, if a person is showing aggression towards the

police, they might calm down knowing that they are being recorded. They would know that there would be evidence of their behaviour and it can be used in court. Research has shown that the use of body cameras has affected the behaviour of the police and the public. This has resulted in less use of force by the police and fewer complaints from the public (Braga et al, 2019). The quality of evidence is another benefit of body cameras. Once recordings have been made of an incident or a witness statement then this can be used in an investigation. It would be classed as reliable and credible evidence. The use of the body camera would lead to a more successful prosecution (White et al, 2017). Not only can body cameras be used in an investigation, but they can also be used as a tool for training new police officers. By reviewing the body camera footage, police officers can see and identify possible areas of improvement, such as, how police officers interact with the general public (Braga et al, 2019). However, the use of body cameras does come with its challenges, for example, there is a concern that the cameras may violate public privacy especially when police officers have to enter a private property or home. There may also be instances where the police may turn off the camera if they find themselves in a situation where they may not want to be recorded as they may be incriminated. According to Ariel et al (2019), it is important to create clear guidelines for police officers and their use of body cameras and using them should be consistent with the principles of evidence-based policing. According to the College of Policing (2023), evidence shows that the use of body cameras does not have a great impact on criminal-related outcomes. However, evidence shows that the use of body cameras has reduced the number of complaints against police officers. The public cannot claim that a police officer has acted unprofessionally if they knew that they were being recorded (College of Policing, 2023).

In the U.K., body cameras have been used increasingly when police officers engage with the public such as domestic abuse cases. Domestic abuse is not only physical violence. Abuse can be psychological, emotional, and financial. The abuser could be a partner, ex-partner or a relative. In England and Wales during 2021, the police recorded over eight hundred thousand domestic abuse-related crimes (Office of National Statistics, 2022). In cases of domestic abuse, the cameras will give valuable evidence, this evidence will help prosecute the offender, and it could also provide safety and protection for the victim. There are many benefits of using body cameras in domestic abuse cases, such as accountability, evidence gathering and victim support. The body camera can record whole instances of domestic violence if the police arrive in time, this will help with the prosecution. If the police arrive after the domestic abuse has taken place, then the body camera will record the aftermath of the abuse, which would include any injuries that the victim has. It will record the abuser's behaviour and any injuries that the victim may have. The body camera may also record coercive control, which is very difficult to prove without recordings. All the evidence from a domestic abuse recording will be used in court, this might reduce the need for victims to attend court. The recordings will support their case (Marshall, 2018). However, in cases of domestic violence, the victim may feel a violation of their privacy if the incident has been recorded, this might cause them to become even more stressed with the situation. All police officers must reassure the victim and explain that the recordings are there for their benefit (Westmarland, 2018). In most cases of domestic violence, the victim may be reluctant or scared of attending court

and giving evidence. Using the body camera footage in court would reduce the need for any victims to give evidence, as a result, they would not need to come face to face with their abuser and they wouldn't need to relive any traumatic experiences. The use of body cameras can also increase the trust and confidence between the police and the victims, for example, victims might report instances of domestic violence if they knew the interactions with the police will be recorded and used as evidence, it would support their case and result in prosecution (Marshall, 2018). A research study conducted by the University of Leeds (2018) shows that body cameras have a mostly positive review from police officers. Many police officers have stated that most abusers plead guilty when they get to court because they know that they cannot argue against the body camera footage. The police in this study have also stated that some witnesses are reluctant to give statements to police officers if they know that they are being recorded. This reluctance may be down to the witnesses being afraid of being identified by the abuser, and they would be concerned about any repercussions. However, in instances such as these, the police could stop the recordings to gather information from the witnesses. In this study, one police officer stated that he was at a domestic violence incident when a man threw a glass bottle at his girlfriend, the bottle cut open the back of her leg, she was being treated by the paramedics at the time of the incident. The body camera footage showed the incident and the severity of the wound. The police officer also stated that his notes would not have done the incident justice, but the footage showed how serious the incident was (Yorkshire Post, 2018).

To conclude, evidence-based policing is an information-driven approach to policing. One of the main goals of evidence-based policing is to collect and use research to help decision-making. Evidence-based policing can create effective strategies to tackle criminal behaviour and collect valuable data to help combat crime. Body-worn cameras are a tool that can be used not only to train police officers but they can be used to protect them from false allegations from the public. In instances of domestic abuse, the body-worn camera can record all the evidence as it happens. This would help the victim because they would not need to attend court and come face-to-face with their abuser. They would not have to relive any traumatic experiences as the incident would all be on the recording. The recordings are reliable and cannot be argued against, this would probably encourage the abuser to plead guilty and as a result, they would be prosecuted. However, public privacy is a factor with body camera recordings, especially with the victims and witnesses who may want to remain anonymous. Police officers must try to encourage victims and witnesses to allow the recordings and remind them that it would assist them in court. The police can stop the camera recording if they need to, however, the information may not be as accurate. Although body-worn cameras are widely accepted by the police and can safeguard them against the public, it is safe to say that body camera are a tool that can benefit both police officers and the public.

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