

Internet of *Police* = Smarter Working



At the Police ICT Company's suppliers' summit in January 2016 the Home Secretary Theresa May called on police forces to "exploit the potential of technology" and implement more joined-up police systems across the UK.

Two days later the government announced that it would take forward legislation to bring about closer working between the police, fire and rescue, and NHS ambulance services, in order to improve

the ability of the UK's blue light services to help communities, protect the public and deliver value for money for taxpayers.

The government's commitment to collaborative working and the utilisation of the latest technology by police forces and other emergency services is borne out of a belief that a mobile-first strategy that encourages the sharing of information is the key to delivering more effective and efficient services for the public.

It also comes from a frustration that many emergency services, including many police forces, have been slow to embrace change,

keep up with the latest technologies and acknowledge the potential of digital solutions to transform frontline policing.

With government funding of the police falling by 20 per cent between 2011 and 2015¹ and force sizes reduced by over 35,000 nationally over the same period², there has never been a better time for police forces to review their digital transformation strategy and embrace more mobile and collaborative forms of working.

Embracing digital

Given that over 75 per cent of people in the UK own a smartphone, it is perhaps surprising that many police forces are still using the traditional pocket notebook to collect witness statements and collate evidence. As Theresa May put it in her speech in January: "Police officers all too often use technology that lags woefully behind what they use as consumers."

In a world where there is an app for everything, from finding the best travel route to watching your favourite TV show, it is vital that police forces harness the potential of connected devices and employ software that frontline officers are familiar with.

Apps have the potential to significantly aid the work of officers. For example, if an officer was called out to investigate a shop burglary, while en-route they could be sent up-to-date information about the crime, details of any recent related incidents in the area and even CCTV footage of the incident by the local authority. After taking statements from the shop owner and witnesses they could enter the information into their mobile device – this would be used to generate a crime report and the information matched against existing data to identify leads that other officers could immediately act on.

Many police forces have already started to overhaul services by implementing new technologies – for example, officers are being deployed with remote cameras and body worn video facilities.

In some of the more innovative forces, officers have even started to use social media as a way of connecting and engaging with the public, distributing important information and even gathering intelligence.

With technology also changing the nature of many crimes and the challenges of tackling it, there is added urgency for police forces to embrace new ways of working. At Capita we are already seeing this and are currently providing a police force in the North East with 1300 **SmartWorks™**-enabled phablets, as well as working with over 30 forces throughout the UK for the provision of police solutions and associated services.

With the emergence of a new Emergency Services Network (ESN), which will deliver more bandwidth and greater data speeds to forces from the end of 2016, there has never been a better time to establish a clear digital transformation strategy. This is particularly the case for rural forces, as certain parts of the country may have to wait longer for the faster 4G connectivity to be rolled-out – early adoption of a flexible mobile-first approach will help mitigate against the potential challenges associated with slower data speeds.

Benefits to police forces

By utilising connected mobile devices on the move and embracing what we have called "The Internet of Police", officers will have access to large amounts of data that enable them to keep informed and make better use of their time while on the beat.

Once devices are linked to back-office systems, officers can deliver updates in real-time or immediately after taking a statement from a member of the public. This can improve the accuracy of the inputted data and guarantees that a consistent process is followed.

This smoother flow of data improves officers' visibility of up-to-date information, aids in intelligence gathering and facilitates better decision making.

Other benefits include reducing the amount of time officers spend making phone calls to busy support staff and minimising the amount of time they spend back at a desk typing up lengthy handwritten reports. It also reduces the number of unnecessary follow-up visits officers carry out, many of which could have been avoided if the right information had been available during the initial visit.

In addition to these significant everyday benefits, connected smart devices could also be used to make visual and audio recordings, potentially transforming the way officers record information while on the beat.





Full integration

The key to successfully exploiting the potential of mobile devices is full back-office integration. While officers often carry a number of mobile devices at work, including a work phone, mobile phone and radio, the ability to find and share information is often limited because they don't connect with central systems.

Providing police officers with a tablet or smartphone is therefore not enough to enable effective mobile working – the software used on the devices has to integrate fully with all the systems used by the police force back at base. Any limitations with the technology will prevent forces from evolving their working practices and employing more dynamic methods of policing.

Considering how rapidly technology develops, it is advisable for police forces to find solutions that work on any type of platform or device. This will avoid the risk of new products coming on the market that are incompatible with existing systems, or forces being locked into systems that become outdated or unfit for purpose.

While it may also be tempting for police forces to save money by procuring tools that are capable of sending data to officers' smart phones but do not allow information to be fed back to central systems, this will significantly minimise the benefits that can be achieved by two-way mobile communication.

Collaborative working

Fully integrated mobile solutions also facilitate collaboration between police forces and with other emergency services, such as fire and rescue and NHS ambulance services. If connected mobile apps were also available to local authorities and other public safety agencies, offering varying degrees of levels of access, this could further increase collaboration when dealing with emergency situations.

In her speech, the Home Secretary stressed that police forces can benefit greatly from collaborating and sharing information, particularly on a regional basis. To illustrate her point, she explained that there is not "a single list of hair colours for identifying suspects or convicts

and describing victims, agreed across all forces, (making) automated comparison of records impossible".

Given these difficulties, it is even more important that forces maintain up-to-date digital records – they create a bank of data that can be drawn upon at short notice, aiding integration between forces and the consistent sharing of intelligence.

Cost-effective

With police budgets stretched, meeting the challenge to "do more with less" is also made easier through more collaborative and digital working.

Police forces are wasting precious time on the beat as a result of not being able to access systems and records outside the station. Not only can officers save time and resources when carrying out day-to-day tasks, but by utilising connected mobile devices forces can save money by reducing the number of back-office staff they employ to input data and distribute information.

In her speech, Theresa May cited HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), which estimated that net revenue expenditure for ICT in police forces in England and Wales would total around £600m in 2015/16. She said that when the government came to power, police forces were found to have spent £1bn on ICT.

Her conclusion was that there is "millions if not billions of savings" to be made, "thousands of police officer hours saved" and "untold crimes solved and victims satisfied," all by "getting the fundamentals – information communications technology – right."

Working with a UK police force recently we have been able to show a significant ROI in deploying the **SmartWorks™** application. As their first step in Digital Transformation of their operational policing model **SmartWorks™** would cost them £1 per officer per day and, due to the size of the force, they could potentially realise £4m in savings from implementing Digital Witness Statements alone. With further integration the force could also see a £3m saving and a significant reduction in waiting time to do checks of the Police National Computer (PNC) and £3m by fully integrating crime reporting.

Summary: Smarter Working

Embracing the Home Secretary's challenge to the police and its suppliers to "be ambitious in shaping the future," Capita has developed the latest generation of its **SmartWorks™** solution. It has been designed to help police forces around the country exploit the potential of technology and facilitate smarter inter-force and inter-agency working,

SmartWorks™ is completely device-agnostic, working securely on any device and platform, and providing a fast and secure route to everything an officer requires to work safely and quickly while on the move.

The solution provides officers with access to back-office systems, including evidence and record management systems, command and control systems, and the PNC.

As **SmartWorks™** is deployable on any leading device and platform it delivers a common user experience – this reduces training costs, insulates clients from technology changes and facilitates the exchange of knowledge and data between neighbouring police forces.

The solution also saves officers time, helps deliver streamlined witness care and reduces the need for back office processing, consequently delivering significant savings to police forces. For as little as £1 per-officer per-day the **SmartWorks™** app can deliver significant savings for the UK's police forces.



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