How can digital evidence submissions from the public be used more effectively to reduce road offending and improve road safety?

This is a review of the use of public dashcam footage in policing road safety.

Key details

Lead institution	Keele University
Principal researcher(s)	Dr Helen Wells research.dashcam@keele.ac.uk
Police region	West Midlands
Collaboration and partnership	In collaboration with Lincolnshire Police and the National Dash Cam Working Group, and funded by The Road Safety Trust.
Level of research	Professional/work based
Project start date	January 2022
Date due for completion	July 2023

Research context

In recent years, UK police forces have begun to accept footage from ‘dash cams’ and other digital recordings submitted by the public. This footage can then be processed by the police who decide on the appropriate response.

The growth of this approach has been rapid, but inconsistent – some force areas do not accept footage, while others actively encourage it. The expectations and experiences of road users

engaging with this activity are unknown, but are central to its success.

This project will carry out a review of current activities in this area, influence best practice, and encourage nationally consistent delivery which is manageable for forces, fair and legitimate in the eyes of road users, and secures the best possible road safety outcomes.

This review will engage police staff on the frontline of this approach, as well as policing leaders, to understand the opportunities and challenges. It will also obtain the views and expectations of road users involved in submitting footage and those whose behaviour is reported.

The main beneficiaries are road users, who will benefit from the deterrent effect of a consistent national approach, and specific road users who will benefit from an improved policing experience. Police staff are also beneficiaries, with output recommendations intended to ensure that the resourcing of this approach is appropriate and opportunities for improvement are explored. The main outputs are best practice recommendations and resources, all based on the combination of practical and academic expertise offered by the blended project team.

The main outcomes of this project are a consistent policing experience for road users, and an increase in public engagement in policing the roads that is sustainable. By encouraging reporting in a way that the police can deal with in the most appropriate way, the project aims to reduce unsafe and illegal road user behaviour.

We will ensure that all different modes of road user are included in the research, and only use the phrase 'dash cam' as shorthand for all kinds of digital recording equipment (dashboard and helmet mounted cameras, mobile phones).

Research methodology

The proposed project takes a multiple case study approach ’on the ground’, embedded within the national policy landscape and user engagement, such that outputs will have a solid evidence base and a genuine chance of bringing about real change.

The project involves:

- a national survey of road user attitudes to dash cams and other third party evidence reporting in roads policing
- a survey of UK forces (multiple sweeps)

- interviews with strategic players in the roads policing landscape
- interviews at force level with leaders and frontline decision makers
- interviews with those active in the landscape from a horizon scanning perspective
- interviews with those who have submitted footage to forces
- interviews with those featured in submitted footage
- interviews with general road users, including horse riders and cyclists