LIBERTY

PRIVACY INTERNATIONAL

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCHED

How policing surveillance technology impacts your rights

BODY WORN VIDEO CAMERAS

HOW DO BODY WORN VIDEO CAMERAS WORK?

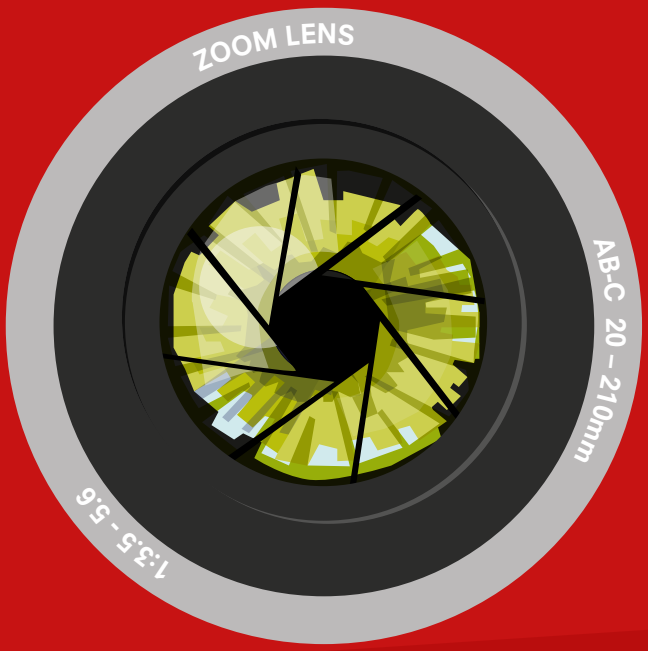
Body Worn Video (BWV) cameras are used by the police to record video and sound.

They are attached to a police officer's clothing – often at chest, shoulder or head level – and record from the officer's perspective. They do not capture the police officer's own actions.

The police officer wearing the device will generally be able to control when to turn the camera on and off.

Some BWV cameras require the video to be manually uploaded to the police force's server after recording. Other cameras upload recordings onto the server or cloud storage automatically. Newer cameras can livestream footage directly back to an officer's base, or other locations.

Some BWV cameras even allow police to edit or delete stored footage. And cameras can be hacked, allowing someone from outside the police force to upload, download, edit and wipe videos.



WHO USES BWV CAMERAS?

In 2016, the Met Police implemented the largest roll out of BWV cameras in the world.

Seventy-one per cent of UK police forces now use BWV cameras, and every police force in the country will have them by autumn 2019.



WHAT DOES THE LAW SAY?

Police use of BWV cameras is not covered by any law. This is worrying because it means that the public isn't protected against misuse and abuse – for example, police forces editing or deleting footage that might incriminate police officers' own actions.

The College of Policing has issued guidance on BWV, which updates the 2007 Home Office guidance on BWV. However, the Government has also said that the use of BWV cameras is an operational matter to be decided by individual police forces.

HAVE YOUR SAY ABOUT BWV

Each police force across England and Wales has an elected Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). PCCs should be a vital way for the local community to hold their local police force to account.

Your PCC should listen to and represent your views about how the police work in your area.

Find out who your local PCC is and how to contact them here. In Scotland, you can contact the Scottish Police Authority.

WHAT ABOUT MY RIGHTS?

Privacy

BWV cameras are a particularly intrusive form of surveillance. They can record a person at very close range and in places where there is no CCTV – including people's homes.

BWV cameras can also be used to monitor people who are going about their everyday lives – including people who do not realise they are being filmed.

And these privacy intrusions are even worse if BWV cameras are combined with facial recognition. If this happens, thousands of police officers could record, scan the faces and snatch the biometric data of anyone they pass by.

So BWV cameras have the potential to track the public at large.

Freedom of expression and assembly

If this sort of surveillance on our streets becomes the new normal, our interactions with the police will be automatically subject to surveillance, as will much of our everyday activity. People may modify their behaviour when they feel that they are constantly being watched.

Discrimination

People in communities who are over-policed (come into disproportionate contact with the police) are most likely to have their rights infringed by BWV cameras. Over-policed communities include BAME communities, as well as people with mental health problems, people who are street homeless and other marginalised groups.

And people with insecure immigration status may also feel that they can no longer approach the police for help because they are being monitored.

LIBERTY

libertyhumanrights.org.uk

PRIVACY INTERNATIONAL

privacyinternational.org