

Bedford Borough Council

CCTV Annual Report – April 2021 to March 2022

Introduction

This report looks at all CCTV records held by Bedford Borough Council (BBC), from incidents and requests, involving the CCTV control room, which were recorded in the year 1st April 2021-31st March 2022. It provides us with a 12-month analysis period in which to evaluate the performance of the CCTV systems. The BBC CCTV Control Room achieved its certification of compliance from the Surveillance Camera Commissioner in December 2019. This is the 3rd annual report to be produced for us. Completing this document annually will allow us to identify key performance indicators, both as a result of the Control Room activities and also the demand on them from partner agencies. In addition it is an indicator of the requirement The Bedford Community Safety Partnership (CSP), under section 115 of the Crime & Disorder Act 1998, of the need to work with and share information, to protect their local communities from crime and to help people feel safer. Community safety partnerships (CSPs) are made up of representatives from the 'responsible authorities', which are the:

- Police
- local authorities
- fire and rescue authorities
- probation service
- health

The responsible authorities must work together to work out how to deal with local issues like antisocial behaviour, drug or alcohol misuse and reoffending. They annually assess local crime priorities and consult partners and the local community about how to deal with them. This will likely involve the use of static or deployable CCTV cameras as a problem solving tool.

This report will detail the third year information analysis for the BBC CCTV control room. The information is broken down into reports generated both by the CCTV control room and partner agencies. The highest concentration of incidents is within the Bedford Town Centre area which is also where the majority of partners work together covering Local Authority, Police, Night Time Economy (Bedsafe), Retail Radio Link (Town Centre Commerce) and a number of volunteer organisations. It is anticipated that the reporting mechanism will develop and change over the next three years.

Incidents

The total number of reports into the control room for the period 01/04/21 – 31/03/22 was 1,528

The primary sources of calls (incidents) into the CCTV control rooms are from the Police. These are made up of calls from their Control Room, Police Officers and PCSO's and accounts for 507, 33.18% of all calls. This is in line with the last financial year (32.53%) a good indicator of the effectiveness of the CCTV service in assisting the Police.

The CCTV Control Room accounted for 598 reports requiring a response from any partner covering the town centre in particular, 39.26% of all calls. A lot of this work is down to a robust pro-active ethos within the CCTV control room. This is also as a result of information sharing between the local authority and the police around for instance wanted persons, missing persons, vulnerable individuals, specific targeted operations involving partner agencies and retail crime initiatives.

Calls from other partners accounted for 423 reports – 27.77%

Other calls from council departments accounted for 23 – 1.5% of all calls.

The number of arrests monitored on camera was 469 a considerable increase of 30.77% against last year. Due to the pressures on police forces across the country, the police presence in the town centre specifically has been reduced. The CCTV control room have become very active in identifying individual's that are wanted, on recall to prison and active in retail theft.

The town centre area is to a degree still affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic and footfall has yet to reach the same as the pre pandemic period. In addition to this number of larger stores have closed in the town centre, driving shoppers to other towns such as Milton Keynes, again reducing the footfall in the town centre.

Reviews and media seized during investigation

The BBC CCTV staff are responsible for analysing and viewing images at the request of either Bedfordshire Police or any other authorised officer of the Local Authority. They will also provide information and images whereby requests for footage have come from a third party such as an insurance business. This is all completed in accordance with GDPR and Data Protection legislation.

In 2021-2022, the BBC CCTV control room received a total number of 532 requests for footage to be copied for use as evidence. This is a significant increase of 160 – 43.01% against last year. The team have embraced the additional staffing requirement this has caused on the control room. It also identifies the importance the CCTV control room has in supporting the police with investigation and provision of evidence.

Deployable cameras

BBC CCTV have a total of 33 deployable cameras which have been purchased not only by BBC CCTV, but also partner agencies including, Bedford Prison, Ward Cllrs, Housing Associations and Parish Councils. 5 of these will be ceased in the next 12 months due to them being on a 3g Network. Requests for these camera's to be utilised must be submitted in writing and verified with evidence and data to support their placement. All placements are discussed and agreed at a monthly partnership meeting to ensure that there is a justified requirement for a camera to be located in an area. Of the 33 cameras, 14 have been provided by the BBC Community Safety Team

During the period April 21 to March 22 there was a total of 38 requests for the use of deployable cameras. These covered a range of issues including fly tipping, antisocial behaviour, threatening behaviour, drug use & dealing and exploitation in varying manners.

Projects

BBC have been successful in a bid to the Home Office, Safer Street's III Fund to Install more cameras in the high footfall areas in 4 separate areas on the outskirts of the town centre area. This included the installation of 14 new cameras and a further server in the CCTV Control room

We are currently in discussion with other BBC teams to consider a further upgrade to cameras in the newly named Station Quarter taking in the train station and main walking route into the town centre. If successful we could be introducing a further 16 cameras throughout the town centre, along with a further server.

The CCTV system is over 20 years old and has grown organically from the original 9 cameras covering the town centre to over 700 covering our car parks, museum and some of the urban areas outside of the town centre. The system itself is comprised of a combination of cameras based upon fibre networks, wireless networks and mobile data linked cameras. It is of vital importance that we can secure funding where possible to continue to upgrade our the CCTV cameras throughout the Borough of Bedford.

The BBC CCTV maintenance contract is still in the process of being prepared to go out for tender. It is anticipated this will occur by the end of 2023

Protection of Freedoms Act

Section 33 of the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 (PoFA) requires all local authorities to pay due regard to the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice (SCC Code) where they operate surveillance cameras overtly in a public space. The BBC CCTV system achieved its certification of compliance from the Surveillance Camera Commissioner in December 2019 and is subject to an annual review until a full inspection in 2021. We are pleased to share that our audit commended us on a number of good practice processes being in place to manage every aspect of our CCTV processes and policies. We are also very pleased to have passed on the first audit we had requested with the SCC.

Training and staff

The BBC CCTV team play an integral part in the prevention and detection of crime, safeguarding of vulnerable young & elderly, provide a key link between partners working and utilising the Bedford Town Centre, whilst ensuring that both residents and visitors to Bedford Borough Council feel safe whilst going about their daily life. The control Room is a 24/7 365 day operation, the team is made up of 1 full time supervisor and 7 staff comprising 5 full time and 2 part time. The team played a huge part in us acquiring our certification from the SCC. The level of commitment, enthusiasm and hard work shown by all of them is admirable and they are a great asset to BBC.