

Summary of substantive policy discussions
at Liberty Council meeting
November 2014

Locational placement of static CCTV and use of body worn cameras (BWC)

The Council discussed the principles that should govern the locational placement of static CCTV and police use of BWCs. Modern CCTV cameras can include facial recognition or other biometric recognition technology; audio recording capabilities; and ANPR data matching and tracking. A couple of police forces currently have permissions from the Civil Aviation Authority to operate unmanned aerial devices (commonly known as “drones”) which can carry cameras. Police use of BWV has sharply increased and may soon be rolled out nationally as new CCTV technologies continue to grow apace.

There was a strong consensus that routine, institutional, placement of CCTV cameras in care homes was offensive. The care environment is akin to a private home and routine use of CCTV in care homes would undermine the dignity of the elderly and represent too great an infringement on Article 8 rights. The Council saw a distinction between the blanket use of CCTV in care homes and its authorised and targeted use when suspicions of abuse or other criminality arise. Families should be able to go to the police where they have suspicions about the conduct of carers and the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act rightly allows for targeted surveillance in such circumstances to prevent or detect crime. Council saw an important distinction between environments such as care homes and schools on the one hand and police and immigration detention and removal settings on the other. Those in detention have already had their rights severely curtailed and CCTV can be justified – even mandated – in these environments for the purpose of protecting individuals who are temporarily vulnerable to coercive control and use of force. There were strong views expressed about the benefit of ‘watching the watchers’. Council discussed how best to ensure that CCTV has a genuine deterrent – rather than displacement - effect on bad police behaviour. It was noted that patchy CCTV coverage in police vehicles, stations and detention centres may displace rather than deter bad practice.

There were anecdotal reports by Council members about the positive impact of BWV on police behaviour. The meeting also heard that the images captured by police BWV had been helpful defending prosecutions of

protesters. However concerns were expressed about the lack of detailed BWV standards and guidance, variance among different police forces and the potential for BWV to be selectively controlled by police. Council noted that the justification for use of BWV would be dependent on context and was, for example, much easier to justify when firearms officers are deployed. It was agreed that far greater national regulation of BWV is required before it is rolled out nationally.