

Public sector impact studies

Policing: Rapid Video Response as a first response tool





The problem

Contemporary UK policing faces a persistent imbalance between rising public service demands and limited operational resources, resulting in lengthy delays for non emergency responses. A primary consequence of this is evidence spoliation. For instance, victims - particularly in domestic abuse cases - may clean disrupted scenes and injuries while waiting, unintentionally destroying key corroborative material.

Simultaneously, victims' willingness to participate can wane as they reconsider the personal costs, face pressure from the offender, or feel unsupported by the delayed response. This combination of lost evidence and declining cooperation substantially weakens cases before they formally begin.

This public sector impact study is based on a talk at Productivity Pitches, a series of events hosted by the Institute for Government and The Productivity Institute, which aims to share and support ways to improve public sector performance levels. The talk is available to watch on the [Institute for Government's website](#).



The innovation

The Rapid Video Response (RVR) system was developed as a direct answer to this challenge. It leverages simple, accessible technology to provide an immediate police response without the need for a physical deployment in every case.

The process is straightforward, starting with an initial call that comes into the police control room from a victim. This is then followed by triage and risk assessment whereby a dispatcher conducts a risk assessment to determine if the incident is suitable for RVR. Key criteria for suitability would include: the offender is no longer present at the scene; the victim is not assessed as being highly vulnerable; and the victim has the technical capability (a smartphone) and consents to a video call.

This would then be followed by an 'immediate connection' phase whereby, if deemed appropriate, the case is passed to a dedicated RVR officer who immediately sends a secure video link to the victim's phone. The victim then clicks the link, initiating a live video call with the officer. This 'virtual attendance' allows the officer to speak with the victim, see their demeanour, view injuries, and survey any damage to the property in real time.

This protocol directly replaces the conventional model, whereby the victim would experience a significant and often indeterminate delay before the arrival of a physical unit.





The impact

The efficacy of the RVR intervention was evaluated through a randomised control trial¹, the findings of which demonstrated substantial improvements across multiple domains.

- First, the intervention was found to substantially reduce the amount of time that individuals had to spend waiting for a response. For those who opted in to the intervention, the average response time was reduced from over 32 hours to 3 minutes. As a result, 'failure demand' (the time spent handling follow-up enquiries about an initial request) fell by 25%.
- Second, the trial indicated a statistically significant causal link between the RVR intervention and improved criminal justice outcomes. Most notably, its application resulted in a 50% increase in the arrest rate, and a 20% increase in the rate of offenders being charged. This is attributed to the protocol's capacity to secure high-quality evidence and victim testimony at a point of maximum cooperation, prior to potential evidence degradation or witness disengagement.
- Third, the promptness of the response engendered a public high satisfaction rate with 84.9% of recipients reported being satisfied with the service, compared to 78.4% in the control group. Moreover, 70% of the treatment group reported a reduction in anxiety after the service, compared to 60% in the control group. Victims reported feeling supported and validated immediately, in stark contrast to the anxiety and uncertainty characteristic of the conventional waiting period.

1 A full write-up of the trial is available here: Rothwell, S., McFadzien, K., Strang, H., Hooper, G., & Pughsley, A. (2022). Rapid video responses (RVR) vs. face-to-face responses by police officers to domestic abuse victims: A randomised controlled trial. *Cambridge Journal of Evidence-Based Policing*, 6(1), 1-24.



Takeaways

The RVR innovation promises to enhance both operational efficiency and victim support. Analysis by the police productivity team suggests that up to 23% of reported incidents could be managed via RVR, offering significant efficiency gains and better outcomes for victims.

A key issue highlighted in delivering this improvement was how police management can be reluctant to adopt new technology out of concern that their professional reputation may be negatively affected by any issues that emerge. This issue, particularly prevalent in public service like policing where actions are subject to intense scrutiny, can lead to a culture where failure within a known and established procedure is considered more defensible than the potential failure of a novel one. This can lead to a preference for "failing conventionally" where police management do not adopt a productivity-enhancing innovation out of concern that it would incur personal liability issues. This issue highlights how the risk management capability of an organisation is strongly affected by how failure is perceived by the workforce, and whether they believe that any instances of it will be handled fairly.

To further promote wider adoption, the pilot team are looking at codifying the knowledge they learnt about how to implement the technology successfully. This blueprint includes all requisite policies, information-sharing agreements, and operational scripts. This would enable other police forces to adopt the system without duplicating the initial development and validation work.

Consequently, approximately 33 out of the 43 police forces in England and Wales are now actively implementing or exploring the RVR model. Further policy integration is also being explored with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to optimise the use of RVR-generated footage as primary evidence in legal proceedings.

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