

**Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) – [Body Worn Camera’s - BWC’s]**

Document Information

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**Aim**

The primary purpose of the use and activation of Body Worn Cameras (BWC) in Galway County Council is to improve the safety of staff.

# Purpose

To mitigate against the risks to the health and safety of staff in the field where the deployment of BWCs may serve to de-escalate a situation by indication to those present that actions may or shall be recorded.

The BWC is provided solely for health and safety purposes and to attain evidence of threatening or abusive behaviours against the employee.

Galway County Council believes that use of body worn cameras for this purpose is not just helpful in achieving its goals of protecting staff but is actually necessary for this purpose.

# FLOW CHART

Galway County Council employees will receive training in the use of BWC and periodic refresher training in Conflict Awareness



Staff will sign the BWC log and collect the BWC from the designated area at the start of their shift. They will wear the BWC for the duration of the shift.



BWC are worn by a person and are usually attached to their clothing or uniform. BWC’s may form part of a frontline employees Personal Protective Equipment. Clear signage will be displayed, for example on an individual’s uniform, to show that recording is taking place and whether the recording includes audio.



In the event of an incident unfolding or member of staff feeling threatened, staff wearing the camera will immediately activate the BWC and should, where possible, notify the individual, that the incident is being recorded.



At the end of their shift the employee will return their device to the docking station for uploading and recharging and sign the BWC log. They will report any faults or damage to the cameras.



The audio-visual footage recorded by the BWC devices will be uploaded to the Digital Evidence Management Software (DEMS). Access to the DEMS system is managed through an access control system only allowing access to authorised users only. Supporting Incident reports must be logged in relation to any incident.

# Introduction

This procedure should be read in conjunction with Galway County Council’s CCTV Policy.

The concept of BWC has been piloted and evaluated by Galway County Council’s Housing Tenancy Enforcement Officer and found to de-escalate situations and ensure the health and safety of the employee.

Data collection and storage in respect of BWC’s must be assessed through a Data Protection Impact Assessment to ensure compliance.

BWC and their associated accessories have undergone a rigorous testing process to ensure that they are suitable and safe for use within the Council.

# Scope

This procedure applies to the use of Body Worn Cameras by Front line staff including but not restricted to; Community Wardens, Dog Wardens, and Housing Estate Management Staff. Please refer to [**Appendix 7**](https://www.galway.ie/en/services/yourcouncil/dataprotection/cctv/) which provides an inventory of BWC’s used by Galway County Council.

Body Worn Cameras will not be used to gather evidence for Parking Enforcement or any other enforcement purposes.

The authorisation of staff to use a body worn camera requires a Chief Executive’s Order.

# Training

Training in the content of this procedure and the use of the BWC’s will be provided. This training will include practical use of equipment, on-street operational guidance and best practice, when to commence and cease recording and the legal implications of using such equipment. Additionally, Wardens and other frontline staff receive periodic refresher training in Conflict Awareness.

# Systems and Recording

The BWC device is generally a body mounted device with a built-in microphone, enabling both video and audio recording. Officers will use the BWC device supplied to them, including mounting options.

The audio-visual footage recorded by the BWC devices will be uploaded to the Digital Evidence Management Software (DEMS). DEMS is password protected and provides a secure platform for the storage of footage.

The device stores digital files which, once recorded, cannot be edited, altered, deleted, duplicated, copied, shared or otherwise distributed in any manner by unauthorised officers. Each file carries a unique identifier and is time and date stamped throughout.

Supporting Incident reports must be logged in relation to any incident.

The BWC (and associated fittings / harness) must be handed back at the end of the shift and any damage reported.

# Procedure

The following is guidance on the use of BWC when recording incidents.

## **Recording an incident**

The allocated member(s) of staff will wear a BWC device for the duration of their shift. The device will not be recording until activated.

The decision to record or not record any incident remains with the staff member wearing the device.

Staff will be trained to ensure only records that are relevant are recorded.

The BWC will only be activated in the event where staff find themselves in a confrontational situation where they are subject to or feel that they are likely to be subject to, verbal or physical abuse.

1. Recordings should not commence until the warden has issued a verbal announcement, where possible, of their intention to turn on the body worn device.
2. Recordings will not be made whilst performing normal patrolling duties.
3. Where the officer has had to commence recording due to an incident occurring, the officer should continue to record for a short period after the incident to clearly demonstrate to any subsequent viewer that the incident has concluded and the user has resumed other duties or activities.

## **Incident specific**

Employment of the BWC must be incident specific and therefore users should not indiscriminately record their day to day activities.

BWC are worn by a person and are usually attached to their clothing or uniform. Body Worn CCTV may form part of a frontline employees Personal Protective Equipment. Clear signage will be displayed, for example on an individual’s uniform, to show that recording is taking place and whether the recording includes audio.

Users should use straightforward speech that can be easily understood by those present such as ‘I am wearing a Body Worn Camera and recording this incident’.

Supporting Incident reports must be logged in relation to any incident. Where an officer experiences an incident in which they felt threatened in any way or has disengaged due to a person objecting to being filmed and whether they have captured the incident on camera or not, the officer is still required to report the incident by completing an incident report form immediately.

## **Privacy**

In so far as is practicable, users should restrict recording to areas and persons necessary in order to obtain evidence relating to the incident and should attempt to minimise collateral intrusion on those not involved.

## **Interruptions to Filming**

Unless specific circumstances dictate otherwise recording must continue uninterrupted from the commencement of recording until the conclusion of the incident.

## **Concluding of filming**

Prior to concluding recording the user should make a verbal announcement to indicate the reason for ending the recording.

Supporting Incident reports must be completed in relation to any incident.

# Data

## **Storing and Reviewing footage**

The audio-visual footage recorded by the BWC devices will be uploaded to the Digital Evidence Management Software (DEMS). Access to the DEMS system is managed through an access control system only allowing access to authorised users only.

The DEMS system includes a full audit system logging all access to footage by authorised individuals; this includes fully searchable reporting on user access, views, edits and sharing activity. Complete system from Camera to Court.

DEMS is password protected and provides a secure platform for the storage of footage.

Supporting Incident Reports must be logged in relation to all incidents.

For incidents where An Garda Síochána have not been in attendance, the authorised staff member will review the recording and in consultation with the Officer operating the device a decision will be made on whether referral to the Garda is appropriate.

Data that is not required for further investigation or in accordance with statutory requirements will be deleted after 30 days from date of being filmed.

All retained data will be kept until all investigations have been completed or a prosecution has taken place.

## **Monitoring**

This procedure is subject to the same monitoring / review arrangements as described in the parent policy (Galway County Council’s CCTV Policy)

The procedure will be reviewed as required.