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Risk control

Bodycams in Higher Education – Better Security



In partnership with



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Introduction

The use of Body-Worn Cameras (bodycams) in Higher Education is becoming an increasingly common sight. This guidance document explores the benefits of their use and highlights some risks that could be avoided through necessarily robust management practices and arrangements.

Purpose

The purpose of wearing bodycams is to enhance safety, security, and community wellbeing. Their use assists in detecting, evidencing, preventing, and reducing criminal acts on university campuses.

Wearing of bodycams can function as deterrents to situations occurring and footage provides evidence in cases of incidents ensuring accountability. Footage captured can help resolve disputes by providing objective records of any interaction. Security staff can use bodycams to de-escalate confrontations by informing of their use and recording of situations.

Visible use of bodycams promotes transparency between security staff and the university community. Trust is built when stakeholders know that interactions are documented and managed appropriately.

The Law

The use of bodycams is subject to specific regulations.

Security Industry Authority (SIA) Licensing

If bodycams are used for security purposes, a suitable SIA Licence¹ may be required.

Front-Line Licence – if you watch live or recorded video footage from a bodycam as part of your role (e.g. public space surveillance), you are likely to need a Public Space Surveillance (CCTV) Licence.

Non-Front-Line Licence – if you manage or supervise others using bodycams, you will need a non-front-line licence.

No Licence needed – If you wear a bodycam but do not watch the footage, no SIA licence is required.

If further information is required, please contact the Security Industry Authority directly. To check if you need an SIA licence to wear a bodycam consult the government website.

Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018² - bodycam wearers must comply with GDPR principles, ensuring fairness, transparency and data security. Institutions using bodycams should encrypt footage to keep it safe. Individuals have the right to request access to footage recorded by

bodycams under data protection laws, ensuring that robust mechanisms are in place for the proper handling, retention, and access control of recorded data are essential.

Human Rights Act 1998³ incorporates the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law. Article 8 protects the right to respect for private and family life. When it comes to using bodycams, this means balancing the need for public safety with individuals' rights to privacy.

Operational Practices

Training and Awareness

Security staff using bodycams should receive appropriate training. They need to understand how to activate SOS alerts, circulate broadcasts, and enable two-way communications to ensure their safety. All security staff using bodycams should receive comprehensive training on their use, including practical equipment handling, guidance, and legal aspects. It must be clear that people are informed before recording begins, having an understanding when and how to start and stop recording, as well as the legal framework surrounding CCTV use.

While there are no specific laws or regulations covering the use of bodycams, guidelines exist for correct and legal usage, especially for police officers. Institutions should ensure their policies and arrangements consider existing guidelines to establish standards for bodycam use.

Setting internal standards for activation of bodycams is essential for consistent use across security functions. These standards should cover use during patrols, incidents, or interactions with individuals. Ensuring that procedures are followed for data handling, storage and access is essential.

Clear Communication

Communicate openly with staff, students and visitors about bodycam use and deployment. Clearly display signs indicating bodycam use will inform those that may be affected by its use.

Beneficial Uses

It could be beneficial to use footage for future training purposes and analysing critical situations to improve response strategies and arrangements. Evaluations can be conducted on the use of bodycams, considering their impact on safety, behaviour, and satisfaction of their use in the university community.

The use of bodycams enhances incident documentation, providing valuable evidence. However, ensuring that suitable protocols and arrangements are in place for the proper storage and management of recorded data will ensure the integrity of this evidence.

Understanding Risks

Negative Risks

Invasion of privacy (recording people without their consent) can infringe on their personal privacy rights. Uncontrolled recording may capture private conversations or personal moments unintentionally that may have lasting impacts. Regulatory authorities may impose fines for violations. The fines can vary significantly based on the severity of the breach and the institutions size. The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) can issue fines under data protection legislation. Individuals affected by non-compliance may seek compensation through civil claims, resulting in a financial liability for the institution. Legal action may also result in reputational damage as negative publicity and loss of trust can have long-lasting effects.

Selective Recording and Bias

Users might release or edit footage, which may lead to biased narratives being communicated. People may focus on incidents that confirm their existing beliefs.

Legal Challenge

The authenticity and context of footage can be contested in any legal proceedings which may impact on outcomes. Ensuring that proper handling and storage of recorded footage is crucial to its integrity.

Policy Review

Regular review of relevant policies and arrangements to ensure that these align with legislation and best practices will allow the institution to receive full benefits of using bodycams within their institutions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is essential to ensure effective bodycam management complies with legal obligations, including obtaining the relevant licences and ensuring data and footage is used appropriately. Ensure associated policies and arrangements are kept up to date to take advantage of good practice and follow legal requirements.

References

1. Security Industry Authority (SIA). Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/security-industry-authority>
2. Data Protection Act 2018. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/data-protection>
3. Human Right Act 1998. Available at: <https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/contents>

Further Information

For access to further RMP Resources you may find helpful in reducing your institution's cost of risk, please access the RMP Resources or RMP Articles pages on our website. To join the debate follow us on our LinkedIn page.

Get in Touch

For more information, please contact your broker, RMP risk control consultant or account director.

contact@rmpartners.co.uk



Risk Management Partners

The Walbrook Building
25 Walbrook
London EC4N 8AW.

020 7204 1800
rmpartners.co.uk

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