

Managing the expectations of mobile CCTV

Recorded CCTV footage required for use as evidence in court is reliant on a number of key factors before it is deemed to be of sufficient quality.

- Lighting levels. White light will give a better colour rendition than sodium lighting and is therefore the preferential lighting medium for CCTV.
- Camera specification. The choice and quality of the lens affects the quality of the images. The sensitivity and lux level of the camera is important.
- Distance from the target being recorded to the camera and the type of lens in the camera i.e. wide angle or zoom type lens. There are set required minimum standards on image size (when compared to the screen on which it is being viewed) to enable the IDENTIFICATION of a person or persons for the evidence to be admissible. Ultimately, it will be up to the court to decide what is or is not admissible, however, if the images do not meet these minimum standards, then any footage may only be considered as either capable of RECOGNITION, DETECTION or MONITORING of a person or persons and identification may not be possible before a court.
- Clothing of person(s) being recorded. A 'hoodie' or hat can hamper the ability to gain useful and admissible footage to IDENTIFY a person or persons.
- Maintenance, cleanliness and serviceability of the CCTV equipment can have a considerable bearing on the quality of recorded images. Many CCTV systems fail to provide evidential quality material because little or no maintenance is carried out to allow the system to work at an optimum level.

When and where to use CCTV

One of the most common problems faced with using CCTV, especially as a 'stand-alone' option, is that there is usually an unreasonably high expectation of its capabilities. There can often be a public presumption that any recorded footage will automatically be of sufficient quality and size to be admissible *and* effective as evidence when, in reality, only a relatively small percentage will meet the required standard. It is therefore advisable that all interested parties are made aware of the limitations so that expectations can be managed effectively.

CCTV is not the panacea for all crime and anti-social behaviour. The UK is thought to be the most watched country in the world, with up to 4.5 million CCTV cameras and this leads some people perceive Britain is a 'surveillance society'. CCTV is now the norm on every high street and there can sometimes be the assumption that CCTV is the only solution to a crime problem. There is a 'school of thought' in crime prevention circles that if CCTV *has* to be installed then the environment has not been designed properly in the first place.

CCTV *does* have its uses though; it *can* help prevent crime and it *can* provide feelings of safety and confidence for the public; however it can be an expensive solution that may not be cost effective when installed in isolation. In this application, it may only be a short term solution to a symptom rather than tackling the root causes through other, longer term methods. CCTV *does* have an important part to play in crime prevention; however, **it should be considered as part of a toolkit of measures and not as a 'standalone' option.**

For more information please contact the Crime Prevention Team on 01332-222077.