

Mobility Pilot

Feedback from the Association of Garda Sergeants & Inspectors

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Introduction

AGSI have been asked to provide feedback on the Mobility Pilot held in Limerick from December 2017 to October 2018

The AGSI have consulted with the members who used the Mobility Pilot devices and have considered the pilot report.

At the outset AGSI must emphasise that the deployment of any tool which supports front line police men and women and which assists them in providing a better service to the public, without increasing their daily work load must be welcomed.

The pilot report outlined the distribution of the mobile Data Stations among members. AGSI note that the report indicated Sergeants were provided with nine devices. It would appear from speaking with members in Limerick that only two of our members used the devices. Accordingly our feedback from end users is limited.

AGSI are unsure if the Pilot project is concluded or continues to operate. This is not clear from the documents provided.

AGSI's Observations

As stated objective of the pilot was to try *'balance the primary objective of learning as much as possible about the potential impact of Mobility on policing in An Garda Síochána with the functionality and features we were able to provide.'* This is of course a fundamental objective of any pilot.

From an Associations perspective we must consider additional matters including:

- Impact on existing workloads for Sergeants and Inspectors
- The impact on work life balance and
- The implications for our member in enforcing policy associated with the new initiative.

Key facts and Findings

The key facts and findings lead to interesting reading. The increase in activity and the policing successes associated with the use of the mobile devices are welcome positives. These achievements must be recognised. However, assessing the success of the pilot overall is more than just assessing statistics.

Under the heading 'Mobility - a key enabler of more effective policing' the pilot reported a potential positive impact. AGSI make the following observations under these headings:

Less work Per case - less travel time and transcription.

The pilot report recognises *'the MDS provided very limited access to PULSE data (Specific Driver and Vehicle Lookups) and no formal data capture facilities (apart from e-mailing basic content captured on device)'*.

The mobility pilot undoubtedly supported more effective communicating with victims and injured parties. This could have contributed to increased Garda visibility within the community. Overall AGSI believe complex crime investigations or traffic collisions still require a significant time investment on the Garda members behalf. Matters such as taking statements, gathering other evidence and preparing an investigation file is not supported by the current functionality on the MDS.

Considering this AGSI find it difficult to understand how the report could extrapolate from the Pilot a finding that there is less time per case.

Case Closures

Please see observations under members safety.

Community Engagement

AGSI acknowledge the examples provided give a clear example of how the mobility project supported front line community engagement.

Member safety

AGSI note the pilot report which cited *'participants reported where they successfully used the threat or actual use of the MDS to record video to change the behaviour of the member of the public in a way that made them feel safer'*. This provides real evidence of the value of body worn cameras and AGSI would support the implementation of such technology.

We are curious however how this activity complies with the observations in the report from Chief Superintendent, Legal Section, which states *'it is the view of the legal section the recording of video with the Mobile Data Station by members of An Garda Síochána is not covered under the 2009 legislation. It is the view of legal Section that the device should not be used for this purpose or as a body worn camera'*.

This point can be equally made under the *Case Closure* heading where; *Several members reported examples where they used photos and videos taken at scene to help them improve the quality of their case file without having to having to spend any more time than usual.*

AGSI must ask can this be reconciled with the Chief Superintendent's remarks above? How does this comply with the new GDPR rules. Indeed, based on the report that *'A number of participants described how they were able to send scanned copies of key case documents*

that may have been mislaid in the paper process in order to ensure that the case in question would be heard in court at the first attempt' suggests that further work is required aligning MDS usage and GDPR rules.

Work/Life Balance

The report outlines how MDS *'Allow members to stop using personal smartphones for work purposes'*. AGSI would see this a positive. Members should not be expected to use their personal equipment to provide a policing service. However, we would not view this as a work life balance improvement, per se.

The average number of emails sent over a 30 day period is reported on. What is not reported on is the number of emails accessed or sent by members while on rest days. Is this information available or can it be determined?

The report indicated that *'Several members said that they regularly checked their e-mail on their rest days to make sure that nothing urgent was waiting for them on their return to work'*. AGSI must emphasise that work carried out on rest or annual leave days have a negative impact on a members' work life balance.

Major Challenges and Risks

AGSI welcome the acknowledgement that there are major challenges and risks identified with National implementation. AGSI believes once all risks are identified, monitored and managed effectively there is potential to deliver an effective and safe mobile support tool for the Garda Organisation.

AGSI note the current ICT strategy within An Garda Síochána is geared towards Microsoft platform while the mobile technology pilot is Android or iOS based. AGSI must ask if there is a conflict between the current Garda strategy and a move towards mobility using a different technology. Is there a need for a reassessment of the ICT strategy for the Garda organisation?

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Over many years AGSI have worked closely with Garda management on implementing many change initiatives successfully and will continue to do so. As stated at the outset AGSI support any initiative that enhances and makes policing more effective without increasing the work load of our members.

We see this technology as an excellent support tool for front line members. We are conscious there are limitations to the functionality at point and we are making our observations based on what was piloted and not what might be introduced over time with further development of additional applications.

As a data enquiry device this has limited impact on Sergeants and Inspectors. Increasing the functionality where the MDS becomes a data capture device will introduce additional risks for our members. We must be kept informed in new developments so we can assess their implications for our members. We would seek AGSI input into the development of Apps which are under consideration. We believe engaging AGSI at the development stage will firstly add value to the process but additionally ensure a more effective implementation process when rollout takes place.

As regards the current pilot and any extension of the pilot AGSI make the following recommendations:

Recommendations

- 1 The status of the Mobility pilot is unclear. Is the pilot concluded or has it been extended. A number of issues identified which could result in members being complained of to GSOC for inappropriate use of these devices and members being disciplined.

If the pilot has been extended what policy is governing the use of these devices?
Have members been made aware of the issues that could place at risk of discipline?

AGSI recommend that considering the risks identified during pilot the devices should be returned and the pilot discontinued until a comprehensive policy has been developed.

- 2 A policy document was developed which assisted the pilot implementation but was light on detail. Rolling this project out will require a comprehensive and detailed policy document to ensure the organisation and the individual is protected.

AGSI would recommend a comprehensive organisation policy is developed prior to expanding the pilot.

- 3 The experience from the pilot would suggest the MDS are used by members while off duty. AGSI would contend that the use of work devices should be confined to work time only. At the meeting on 16th October AGSI were disappointed to hear 'off-duty' use was being portrayed as a positive aspect of the pilot. AGSI must emphasise that Garda work is intensive and accessing work emails or doing work on time off should be discouraged as members can suffer increased stress and burnout through never getting away from the job.

AGSI recommend devices should be stored in secure places in the Station on rest days and retrieved when members return to work, in the same way that TETRA radios are stored.

We further recommend the use of the MDS on rest days to access emails or do work should be prohibited by policy.

- 4 The advice from Legal Section suggests the recording images and video is not catered for under the current legislation. Inappropriate use of MDS because of an absence or unclear policy will result in members being complained to GSOC and investigated by them and inevitably disciplined within the Garda organisation.

AGSI recommend the Organisation Policy should prohibit the recording of images and video on these devices until the legislation is changed to cater for such use

AGSI would further recommend the Garda organisation move to deliver body worn cameras to front line police officers as soon as possible negating the need for the use of MDS as video recording devices.

- 5 Asserting that essential proof in investigations files could be lost in ordinary post seems an unreasonable assertion. Nonetheless, there is an absence of policy within the Garda organisation on the use of emails.

AGSI recommend An Garda Síochána develop an e-mail policy for the organisation and this policy would cover what documents are appropriate to be sent via email and particularly what can be sent via email on MDS devices. This will safeguards individuals in light of the strict GDPR rules in operation since May of this year.

- 6 Training is essential to support the effective use of any technology. The idea of members learning by 'trying' is not an appropriate approach to implementing any new initiative and particularly one which will be governed by a comprehensive policy of use.

AGSI recommend a comprehensive training programme must be developed and implemented in parallel with the rollout of the mobility project Nationally. The training should include the use of the devices but also cover the Organisation policy governing the use.

- 7 AGSI have a vital role to play in implementing any new initiative within the organisation. Our involvement in the development of new applications will assist in ensuring they meet the organisations requirements and will support the effective rollout of additional functionality.

AGSI recommend that AGSI, at National Executive level are engaged with to ensure the national implications of new developments can be catered for during the development stage. In this regard active participation with the Association should continue.

