

Award winning mobility solution helps Staffordshire Police put more officers on the street.



Background

Staffordshire Police was first founded in 1842. Today it employs some 2,200 officers based in 4 operational divisions: Chase, North Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent and Trent valley. A key policy of the force is to provide locally accountable, highly visible and publicly accessible police services that are geared towards working in partnership with local agencies to solve community-based problems. To work towards this, Staffordshire Police have introduced a number of innovative initiatives including the Public Reassurance Project. This was launched in August 2002 with the aim of revolutionising the way policing in the area was delivered. A critical factor was to put more police officers into the local community on beat roles to help deter crime and increase public confidence. The aim initially was to increase the visibility of police officers in the community by 10%; this had to be achieved without corresponding increases in the existing manpower.

Challenge

It was realised early in the project planning stages that time savings could be made by removing the need of officers to consistently return to their stations' to satisfy the increasing administrative tasks of the job. Considerable time was being wasted travelling back to the station after each incident, and at the end of shifts, to write up necessary reports. Further time was wasted as officers radioed into the station to check data held on the Police National Computer system. A thorough analysis by the project team, led by Ian De Soya, identified access to data on the beat as a vital factor in ensuring the success of the Public Reassurance Project. Although providing beat officers with mobile devices would significantly reduce the time wasted, there was still the need to balance the benefits against the security aspects. Data could not be stored on the device because of the need for total security of personal information and police operations. A solution that was both mobile and secure was required.

Solution

The project team conducted a thorough analysis of the various mobile solutions available and eventually chose to utilise Citrix MetaFrame Presentation Server running on 4 Dell 1650 Servers. This was deployed in combination with Microsoft Windows 2000 servers, Panasonic ruggedised PocketPCs and the Orange GPRS network.

It was recognised at the outset that such a solution was at the leading edge of technology deployment and so external help would be needed to ensure the successful implementation of the project. Novus had previously worked with Staffordshire Police on the implementation of a Citrix infrastructure and so possessed extensive knowledge of their IT platform, this coupled with their in-depth experience of mobility solutions led them to be chosen as the lead partner.

Initially 90 officers were equipped with the solution allowing them to file reports and access key data about suspects securely from anywhere, without the need to call-up or return to their station. Officers can access data from the Police National Computer System, including PNC checks, as well as complete standard police reporting applications in-situ.

Significant time was spent at the outset to ensure the overall solution was secure, stable and easy-to-use. This ensured that the officers on the beat would be confident to use the system and more importantly rely on it. The RSA SecurID authentication solution was utilised to ensure that only an authorised officer, with the right token, can connect to the system and this login is re-authenticated every 60 seconds.

Additional security is provided by the Citrix Secure Gateway that allows safe access through the corporate firewall to the application servers.



Benefits

Increasing the visibility of officers in the community by 10% equated to a saving of 220 man-years of on-street policing.

Ian De Soyza, project manager, commented:

"Officers can now carry out checks at the scene of suspected crimes by accessing the PNC wirelessly, including checking vehicle registrations, and looking at the profiles of suspects. This means more effective, more immediate policing, which is good for the whole community."

Sergeant Dave Edge is part of the Incident Management Unit whose team is using the devices, he added:

"One of the great things about being able to do PNC checks from the scene is that you don't have to wait for radio airspace – you just run the check yourself over the GPRS network. Enquiries come back within seconds and officers get access to much more data than could ever be passed over the radio in the same time."

De Soyza concluded:

"Response has been excellent from all the officers using the system. We are effectively changing the face of policing, by moving the office to the officer, rather than the other way round."

Future plans

Due to the success of the pilot, plans are now well advanced to scale-up availability of the solution to all the Immediate Response teams across the 4 divisions. In addition more applications are now being added to those initially available ensuring that officers will be more productive and be able to spend their time on providing a quality police service on-the-street, rather than completing forms back at the station.

Stuart Brown, director of Novus, commented:

"We realised when we implemented the solution that it is applicable not only to police forces across the UK but also other emergency services and local government and corporate applications. This was recognised in 2003 when we were awarded the "Best Corporate Mobility Solution" at the Channel awards."

Increasing the visibility of officers in the community by 10% equated to a saving of 220 man-years of on-street policing.



Novus Group

The Old Corn Mill, Congleton Road
Siddington, Macclesfield
Cheshire SK11 9JR



Telephone 01260 292500 | Fax 01260 292505
www.novus.co.uk