

### CATEGORY

## PROJECT OF THE YEAR

### WINNER

## DIGITAL INTERVIEWING PROJECT – METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE

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**METROPOLITAN  
POLICE**

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### Overview

For victims of serious crime, reporting the matter to the police can be a harrowing experience, especially for those who have suffered sexual violence. When conducting interviews with both victims and suspects, it is important that the environment and technology are fit for purpose, providing a secure and safe area.

The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) interview facilities required a major modernisation programme to address a number of legacy issues. These included poor-quality and unreliable interviewing equipment, lack of soundproofing, and interview rooms with low building standards in the wrong locations across London.

Originally scoped as a project to replace only the most unreliable victim interview recording devices, the Digital Interviewing Project grew into improving the IT and building quality of every victim and suspect interview suite owned by the MPS.

### Objectives

In the past 12 months, over 16,000 sexual offences were reported in London. Thousands of victim video interviews are conducted every year. This transformation of the MPS' interviewing facilities was vital in order to deliver a significant positive impact for the general public by increasing victim/customer care, and to manage MPS' significant reputational risk.

Another key requirement was to increase the number of suspect suites capable of recording interviews visually, rather than just on audio. Audio-only suites often denied juries the benefit of seeing the suspect and drawing more rounded conclusions during jury deliberations.

The project would also enable MPS to plan ahead by creating state-of-the-art facilities that embedded future digital capability.

### Delivery and governance

The project adopted a PRINCE2® methodology, with bespoke adherence rather than full compliance. This worked well, as a full PRINCE2®





approach would have been excessive. This flexibility of methodology ensured project delivery with the minimum of personnel and effort – most of the project team had day jobs so unnecessary tasks had to be stripped away.

Other aspects of project management that helped to deliver success included detailed requirements management, effective stakeholder management, resource scheduling, risk management, reporting progress and quality control.

### Challenges

The project faced severe financial restraints due to the public-sector funding squeeze, and had to assertively bid for its £10m capital budget while other projects were facing closure or reduced funding. At one point, the Digital Interviewing Project was also earmarked for closure.

Internally, the project team also needed to work within MPS processes and governance structures, reporting to multiple boards, writing bespoke briefing documents and continually engaging stakeholders to ensure the smooth passage of the project.

Externally, there was continued pressure from victims and the judiciary because of the problems caused by interview equipment that was not fit for purpose. This often led to interim solutions to mitigate risk, but the project held its course. In fact, the additional scrutiny helped to maintain motivation during periods of slower progress.

### Project successes

Despite these challenges, the project team was able to deliver to the required standard, and under both the IT and construction budgets. This enabled the project to realise additional benefits, including mobile interviewing kits and new furniture for suspects.

The result was the transformation of 246 suites in 70 buildings to meet modern building standards and offer cutting-edge technology. The project also created a single look and feel for the entire interview estate in terms of IT, building standards and furniture, allowing for ease of expansion of facilities in the future.

Benefits for the public have included providing, for the first time, child-appropriate furniture in all the victim interview suites. Newly built interview suites were designed to be wheelchair-accessible whenever possible, and the addition of a third camera has enabled those requiring additional support (such as an intermediary or interpreter) to have their needs properly met.

Anecdotal evidence since completion of the roll-out of the new estate in early 2016 indicates a positive impact, as video victim interviews are now reliably secured in a high-quality environment.

One branch of Rape Crisis said: "The new suites are a world apart. They are more comfortable, have equipment that works effectively... and for clients like ours who have suffered from rape or sexual assaults, who are already stressed and emotional, it is a more conducive area."



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# WINNER'S

## CASE STUDY

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