

DURHAM CONSTABULARY BRINGS VOICE SERVICES FLEXIBILITY TO A NEW WORLD OF POST COVID-19 POLICING

Durham Constabulary aims to deliver the best possible service to 600,000 residents of County Durham and Darlington by ‘doing things differently and doing them well’. One of the UK’s top-performing police forces, it is proud of its efficiency, innovation, and ability to cultivate great partnerships to help solve problems.



INDUSTRY
Police

LOCATION
County Durham,
United Kingdom

CHALLENGE
Improve voice communication effectiveness across the force; equip HQ and police station meeting rooms for teleconferencing; make remote working easier during and after post COVID-19; reduce dependency on static telephony

PRODUCTS & SERVICES
Microsoft Teams,
CPS Professional Services

RESULTS
Successful trial of voice services in Microsoft Teams. Configuration and design plans for equipping 33 meeting rooms. Training and technical support package for project rollout.

New voice

As part of its ‘doing things differently’ philosophy, Durham Constabulary regularly reviews its operations. Communications is critical to delivering high quality police services, and any opportunity to improve this area is welcome.

Like many police forces, for many years Durham has used traditional private branch exchange (PBX) telephony for its inbound and outbound calling. However, following strategic investment in Microsoft Office365 suite, Durham’s IT management began to explore the potential benefits of using voice services in Microsoft Teams.

“We were using Teams successfully for collaboration,” explains Ian Wilson, Infrastructure Manager, Business Innovation & Development Command. “So using it for PSTN voice calls seemed a good next step. We wanted to help our people work flexibly from home and between offices, and cut demand on the aging PBX.”

Durham was also keen to leverage its Microsoft investment strategy. The force supports National Enabling Programme Office 365 which aims to align UK police technology.

Knowledge

Encouraged by its reputation with Cumbria Constabulary, CPS was brought in by Ian Wilson to assess Durham’s voice requirements and develop a Teams based solution. The project scope was agreed in late 2019, and a CPS solution architect with deep expertise in Microsoft Unified Communications worked on site at Durham for three weeks.

CPS then provided a roadmap for deploying voice services in Teams starting with a trial for IT users, and a detailed configuration for Durham’s 33 HQ and police station meeting rooms. CPS fully equipped one room for use as a design model for the others. Handover included technical training and workshops to prepare the inhouse team for rollout, and a three-month support package to ensure any problems are quickly dealt with.

“CPS’s level of knowledge was outstanding,” Ian Wilson says. “In fact everything we asked CPS to do was understood and actioned quickly and correctly. They coped with the problems of COVID-19 incredibly well. Having excellent support really helped us to see what can be achieved with the Teams voice solution.”

Designed for the future

The voice in Teams proof of concept is underway with 50 IT users and proving highly effective. Seven meeting rooms are so far equipped with audio conferencing capabilities, and as the other rooms are kitted out, video conferencing will also be enabled.

“The major benefit is flexibility,” says Ian Wilson. “We couldn’t have imagined a more effective test than the COVID-19 business disruption. People working from home say it’s very easy to use voice on Teams and to join meetings. With home working likely to be much more common in future, I’m sure we will also see improved productivity.”

The solution is likely to be used for a wide range of Durham’s operational requirements as it rolls out. For example, inspectors who travel between different stations to brief a police officer shift about to go on duty will do that with one conference call.

There will be cost savings if less desk telephones are needed and travel to and from offices is reduced. Although 999 calls will still be managed with a PBX system, overall reduction in PBX demands could mean a smaller and less costly system is used in future.

CPS continues to support the force, helping to deliver greater resilience for the Teams solution with no single source of failure or loss of calls. CPS is ready to implement other phases of National Enabling Programme Office 365 when Durham is ready.



Business Benefits

- Improved home working flexibility and productivity through ease of use and ability to join meetings remotely
- Cost savings through redundant telephone hardware and reduced travel
- Potential improved service quality for residents.

A word from the team...

“When we need professional services in future, I won’t hesitate to call CPS. I can’t offer any higher praise.”

Ian Wilson, Infrastructure Manager, Business Innovation & Development Command.



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