

Case 10 Issue 38 – Roads policing		LEARNING THE LESSONS
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Pursuit without activating audio recording

Pursuit of a vehicle which failed to stop resulting in a collision, raising issues about:

- *Activating audio recording equipment at the start of a pursuit*

This case is relevant to the following areas:



Overview of incident

Around 1.30am PS A was in his vehicle with PC B. PC B became suspicious of a car (later confirmed as driven by Mr C when he saw it turn right onto a small service road. He said this was strange because it had already passed much more accessible roads.

PS A followed Mr C to a junction at the end of the service road. He saw the car cross straight over the junction and enter a car park. He said this further raised his suspicion because the site the car park was on was closed. He said he felt the car was using small side streets and the car park to evade detection.

PS A followed Mr C into the car park. He said he saw the car accelerate considerably towards the far exit. PS A activated his vehicle's blue lights to show Mr C he intended to stop his vehicle. PS A saw the brake lights flashing in the car, which indicated Mr C had activated the ABS braking system. PS A was able to move close enough to the car to see its registration number. He stopped just short of the vehicle, anticipating getting out of his vehicle to speak to Mr C. However, PS A said almost immediately he saw the reverse lights come on. He said the car reversed a few feet and then drove forward through the exit of the car park at speed.

PS A explained as they were engaged in an initial phase pursuit, PC B began active commentary and, as an advanced driver, he assumed the role of ground commander. He said he believed the risk to be low as there were no other vehicles or pedestrians in the area.

PS A and PC B were joined in the pursuit by PC D and PC E who were in the area.

PS A explained as the pursuit progressed Mr C pulled away from the police vehicles. PS A was considering changing traffic lights/signals, whereas Mr C was not. This caused PS A to re-evaluate the risk as medium.

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PS A stated the police vehicles involved reached speeds of up to 90mph. This was communicated to control room supervisors, who continued to authorise the pursuit.

PC B explained the car went offside on the road, before trying to take a right turn. It collided with a pedestrian crossing and a set of traffic lights before finally striking a building and ending up on its roof.

Following the incident, the IOPC examined footage from the Cleartone system fitted in the lead police vehicle driven by PS A. This footage supported the account of PS A and PC B in relation to the speed of the vehicle and the nature of the pursuit. However, the audio was not activated on the system.

As part of the investigation, the force confirmed to the IOPC the video element of the system was automatic when the ignition started. There was also a button on the dash board that should be pressed to activate all cameras and audio. However, the force confirmed it is not mandatory to press this button but 'best practice'.

Type of investigation

IOPC independent investigation.

Findings and recommendations

Local recommendations

Finding 1

1. The audio element of the vehicle's Cleartone system was not activated during this incident. The force confirmed the use of audio was 'best practice' but not mandatory.

Local recommendation 1

2. The IOPC recommends the force makes activation of the audio recording facility mandatory once a pursuit begins, given the force has confirmed to the IOPC its use is regarded as best practice. Mandatory activation of the audio recording facility can offer better evidence opportunities for any subsequent investigation and can provide greater transparency around policing practice.

Response to the recommendations

Local recommendations

Local recommendation 1

1. The recommendation was raised at the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) national pursuits meeting. It was noted current College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice (APP) in this area states the use of audio recording equipment in pursuit

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situations is “highly desirable”. While the recommendation is being considered at a national level, the force will mandate activating recording equipment at the start of a pursuit for all officers.

Outcomes for officers and staff

1. During the investigation, there was no indication any police officer had behaved in a manner that would justify the bringing of disciplinary proceedings or had committed a criminal offence.

Questions to consider

Questions for policy makers and managers

1. Does your force require officers to activate all cameras and audio in the police car when a pursuit starts?

Questions for police officers and police staff

2. What steps do you routinely take to make sure all relevant recording equipment is switched on and working when preparing to drive a police vehicle?