

Surveillance upgrade helps Islington prevent, deter, and detect crime

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Sean Tuckey

CCTV Crime and Disorder Manager,
Islington Council



When Islington Council merged and upgraded separate surveillance systems it meant the CCTV team could monitor six times as many cameras as before from the central control center, providing a better picture of crime and anti-social behavior across the borough. It's a move that's already having an impact on community safety.

Securing a busy borough

Islington is home to around 215,000 people, making it the highest-density local authority anywhere in the UK. Encompassing areas of extreme diversity in terms of affluence, it is the location of one of the UK's busiest football grounds – The Emirates Stadium. The borough also features more licensed premises per square mile than anywhere else in the UK – 13,000 in total, more than a third of which are allowed to sell alcohol 24 hours a day.

Keeping the public safe, preventing crime and anti-social behavior, and investigating incidents – particularly in areas affected by issues relating to gangs, drugs, and alcohol – is a round-the-clock job for the borough's award-winning surveillance team.

Sean Tuckey, CCTV Crime and Disorder Manager for Islington Council, said:

“Just over a year ago we moved to a new state-of-the-art control room, prior to which we already had an excellent detection rate. But we wanted to do more, and there are several key features of our upgraded surveillance system that are already making a big difference.”

Existing capabilities

Before moving to the new control center location, footage from 165 public space cameras – linked by 17km of fiber optic backbone cable – could be viewed, controlled, and recorded by operators using Synectics' Synergy command and control solution.



PROJECT DETAILS

Client

Islington Council

Location

London, UK

Integrator

Tyco

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PR contact

For further editorial information, please contact:

E: press@synecticsglobal.com

Functionality included live incident tracking, prioritized supervisor access, evidence locker management, and the 'Follow Me' feature, which allowed live footage to be routed through to the police. Combined, these helped the CCTV team to detect more incidents, work closely with the police, and produce high-quality evidential footage to secure pre-trial guilty pleas.

However, cameras monitoring the council's housing estates had been operating on a different system, which sometimes made it difficult to track incidents on a borough-wide basis.

Scaled-up surveillance, simplified

The decision to move the control center and integrate with other key public protection teams, including the Anti-Social Behavior (ASB) units, licensing officers, and the emergency planning unit, provided the ideal opportunity to look at streamlining separate CCTV systems to bring them all under one roof. Doing so required connecting more than 800 cameras from Islington's housing estate areas

– while ensuring each estate still retained localized access and control. This was a simple process thanks to Steve Hatton, Director of Cognetix and the security consultant behind the entire project, Tyco's support as the selected surveillance integrator, and Synergy's technical capabilities.

Operators at the control center are now able to access and collate data from more than 1,000 cameras within a single environment, including 14 3G mobile cameras deployed to 'hot spot' areas – locations often identified through incident type/rate analysis facilitated by the solution's audit trail functionality.

Mr. Tuckey said: "Steve Hatton, our Cognetix consultant, developed a very detailed specification to best suit our needs. He and Tyco ensured the upgrade went very smoothly – with no downtime – and the user-friendly, intuitive nature of Synergy meant the team could quickly adapt to a vastly extended monitoring remit. In fact, just two weeks after one of the estates went live on the new system, one of

our operators was able to use around 80 cameras to help police track and arrest a suspected double murderer and arsonist, who was subsequently convicted. This was a location that our team had previously been unfamiliar with, which makes the achievement even more impressive. That member of staff was named CCTV Operator of the Year 2015 by London's Metropolitan Police.

Integration saves time and helps solve crime

Integrating the separate CCTV systems has had a noticeable impact. According to Mr. Tuckey, requests from the police for footage review, incident tracking, and evidential support have increased significantly because "capabilities have improved so dramatically". On average, around 1,500 incidents are dealt with each quarter and, in the last year alone, the team's investigations helped police solve five murder cases.

Mr. Tuckey continued: "One of the most important aspects of the upgraded

solution is that it has enabled us to integrate very useful technologies on a single command and control platform – using Synergy to collate and manage data from Tyco surveillance equipment and Vigilant recording is incredibly beneficial to operational efficiency.

“Incident reviews – particularly those that involve movement detection – are much quicker. There have been instances where reviews that would previously have taken several hours have been completed in just minutes.

“As well as making it easier for us to help the police solve crimes, integrations such as these also help us prevent incidents from escalating as we are able to quickly detect potential issues and work with the police accordingly.”

The value of audit trails and reports

Importantly for Islington, the monitoring and reviewing efficiencies have not come at the expense of procedural accuracy.

“Since the upgrade, we can monitor and review more cameras than ever before, faster than ever before, while being confident that every action is being logged automatically in order to generate a clear and transparent audit trail. In addition to aiding evidential procedures, this is also a vital tool for training and ultimately demonstrating the valuable service we provide for the borough,” Mr. Tuckey added.

Using Synergy, the Islington CCTV team are also able to deliver detailed reports for incident types, trends, and locations – which can then be fed back

to the police and local management to aid resource planning, e.g. for mobile camera placement or officer deployment.

Customer view

“Our surveillance system is flexible, reliable, robust, and, above all, it is helpful. We’ve got a great team of dedicated operators who are passionate about keeping residents safe and committed to working in partnership with other borough teams to prevent and tackle crime and disorder. Helping these individuals to do their job effectively and efficiently is paramount, and that’s what we’ve been able to do through investing in our surveillance solution,” said Sean Tuckey, CCTV Crime and Disorder Manager, Islington Council.

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