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A force for change

West Midlands Police reveals how it uses the unique capabilities of Samsung Knox to equip its officers with secure, robust, user-friendly mobile devices to take on patrol.

West Midlands Police is the third-largest police force in the UK

Covering 348 square miles, it employs 11,000 staff and protects a population of more than three million people.

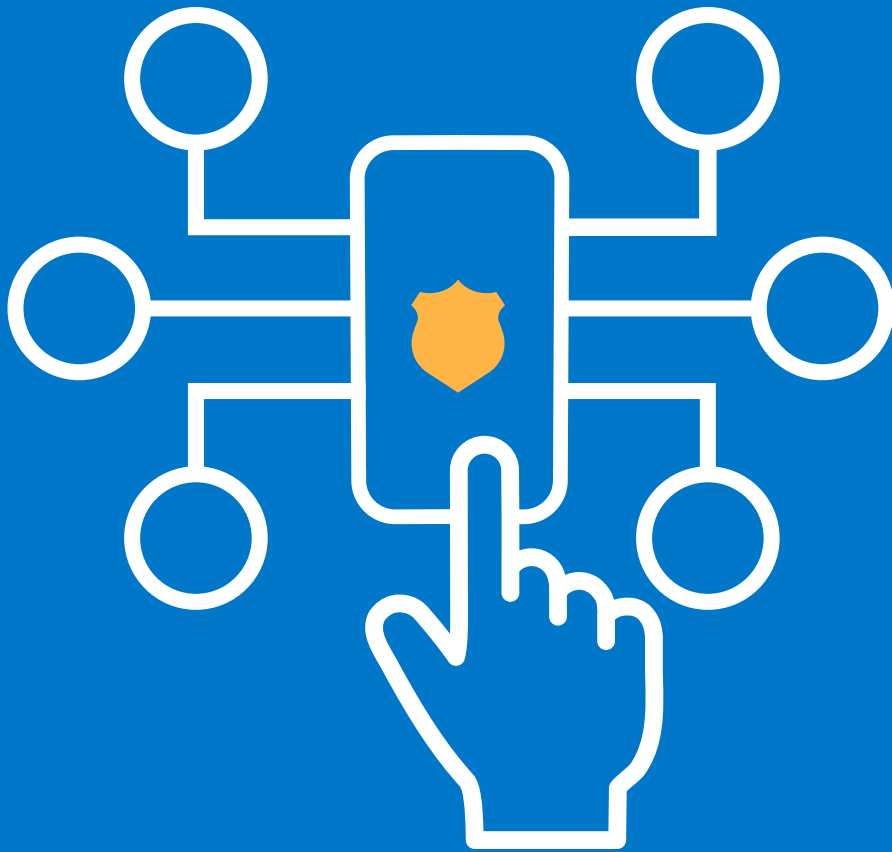
Having endured staffing cuts and austerity measures, the force embarked on a digital regeneration—modernising how it operates with mobility very much at the heart of the initiative.

To achieve this, it turned to Samsung Enterprise Edition devices. With its unique partnership with Google, maker of the Android operating system, Samsung helps customers get more from their managed mobile devices through Knox Platform for Enterprise.



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A digital transformation

In 2016, West Midlands Police rolled out Mobility Phase 1—issuing officers with mobile devices.

The idea was to help officers work in more digital, streamlined ways, reducing paperwork and freeing up more time to spend on the frontline.

It wasn't without its limitations, however, as officers were hesitant to take their devices on patrol. They were seen as being too bulky. Plus, due to security restrictions, many functions on the devices had to be disabled. As a result, officers often left them back at the station. **"We had a lot of phones in drawers and lockers,"** says Alastair Gregory, Head of Delivery Management, West Midlands Police.

In 2019, to encourage officers to adopt the technology, the force replaced 5,000 devices with new Samsung S series phones, and issued devices to a further 2,000 colleagues.

Investing in officers

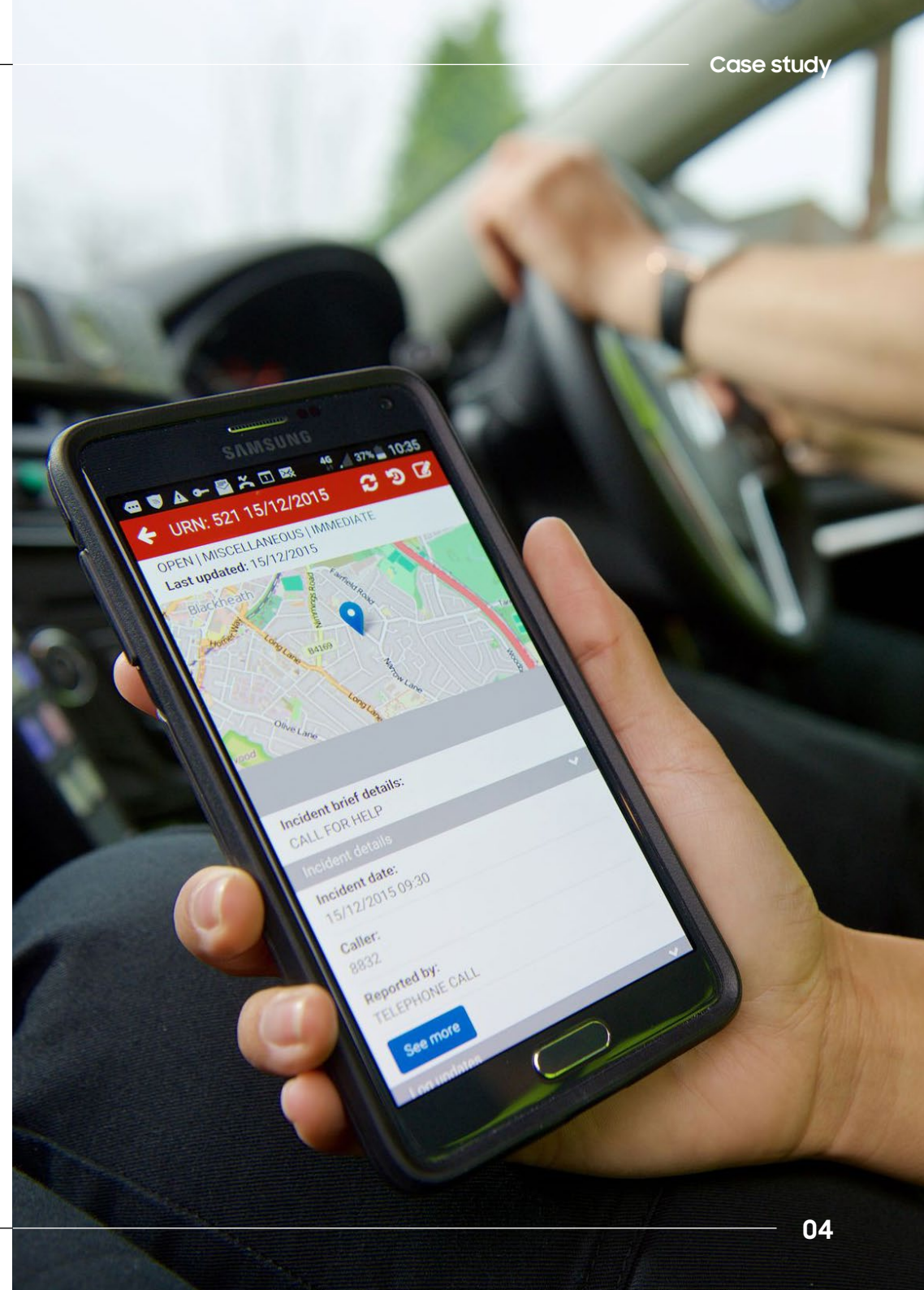
Since the new rollout, uptake has vastly improved. Officers now have phones they enjoy using. The devices are lightweight and slim, so they're easy to carry.

Most importantly, being able to use Knox APIs gives the IT team more freedom to set them up how they want. They've avoided the 'horrible corporate user experience' which stopped some officers using them.



"The Knox APIs give us greater control which we don't get with other devices," says Gregg Hudson, Mobility Team Manager, IT & Digital, West Midlands Police. **"We have more control to disable the things we want to disable; we don't have to blanket disable a whole section of the phone."**

As such, the devices have a better user experience and consumer-like feel—which officers really like. **"Our officers feel massively invested in them,"** says Helen Davis, Assistant Director of IT & Digital, West Midlands Police. **"It helps to boost morale."** In fact, West Midlands Police have become the envy of other forces.





Heightened security

The ability to make the devices so user-friendly is made possible by the robustness and increased security of Samsung Knox.

With the introduction of Knox Platform for Enterprise in Android 8.0 Oreo, Knox features are built on top of the core Android Enterprise framework.

This means the force has a single foundation to deploy Android Enterprise, while adding supplementary Samsung Knox features as they see fit. And for a business that deals with highly sensitive information, this is absolutely vital. In fact, they see it as a real gamechanger.

"The assurance Samsung gives us over device encryption is key," says Gregg. **"Our information security teams have massive confidence that the devices are meeting the security needs of an organisation like ours. We know that from hardware through software, the device is secure."**

As Gregg says, the new phones **"look and feel like consumer devices, but exceed the security level we met previously, without impacting the user experience."**

Unlocking extra features

Knox also lets the force enable certain device features that might not otherwise be available—such as Bluetooth and biometric security.



“There’s a lot of concern over Bluetooth in the policing world. We have strict rules that the Home Office publishes, so some other forces have taken the approach of just turning Bluetooth off completely. But we tick every box the Home Office asks. We can lock down data transfer so we don’t get data loss, but colleagues can still pair the phone to their vehicle for hands-free voice calls.”

When it comes to biometrics, many forces are also concerned about facial recognition for authentication. But Gregg says that’s no problem. Thanks to the control they get with Knox, they can simply disable that feature and instead let officers use fingerprint unlocking, so the devices remain secure.





Quick and easy updates

As well as enabling enhanced security and more granular control over device functions, Knox E-FOTA enables the force to closely manage the firmware on its devices.



"From a support point of view, there's one less variable," says Gregg, "because every device is on exactly the same build of software, rather than them randomly updating. So, it gives us an awful lot of control over standardising the device."

It also makes it easier to create bespoke functions and user experiences for different teams. "The granular control is really useful," says Denis Patel, Technical Delivery Manager, "especially for teams that need devices with a specific function. Not everyone has to have a set update sent out, so we can control which devices they go to."

Streamlining services

With increased security, improved usability and enhanced features, the new devices have enabled West Midlands Police to digitise many of their processes.

For example, officers are moving away from hand-written witness statements, which then need typing up back at the station. Instead, they can connect their mobile device to a Samsung DeX accessory to take witness statements or write up reports wherever they are.





Officers can even get witnesses to read and sign statements on the spot using the touchscreen. The report is then uploaded instantly and attached to an official crime record. This saves time and effort. And it means officers don't need to return to base—so they stay on patrol for longer.



"We're cutting down on travel time, fuel and vehicle usage," says Gregg. **"We get increased police visibility on the street. And we're getting three more jobs per officer per day."** The quality of data captured is also improved as Gregg says it's **"not based on what I remember of my notes and typing it up. We're dealing with people there and then."**

A brighter future

The team are continually exploring the capabilities of Samsung devices and Knox solutions.

The mobile app team is using Android development tools to create bespoke applications. And the force is looking at adding accessories and features to devices—including heat detection cameras to uncover cannabis farms through heat signatures.

“We have so much trust in the technology and the mobility platform that we’re able to consider adding accessories and features to the devices, rather than officers having to carry additional kit,”

says Helen.

West Midlands Police are very satisfied with how their mobility programme has enabled officers to work in new ways. And the officers are happy, too. **“In 24 years, this is the best piece of equipment the force has ever given me,”** says one officer. **“It’s changed the way I work.”**



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West Midlands Police use the following Samsung devices
Galaxy S **Enterprise Edition**

**See how Samsung Enterprise Edition can help free your
workforce at samsung.com/uk/business/enterprise-edition**