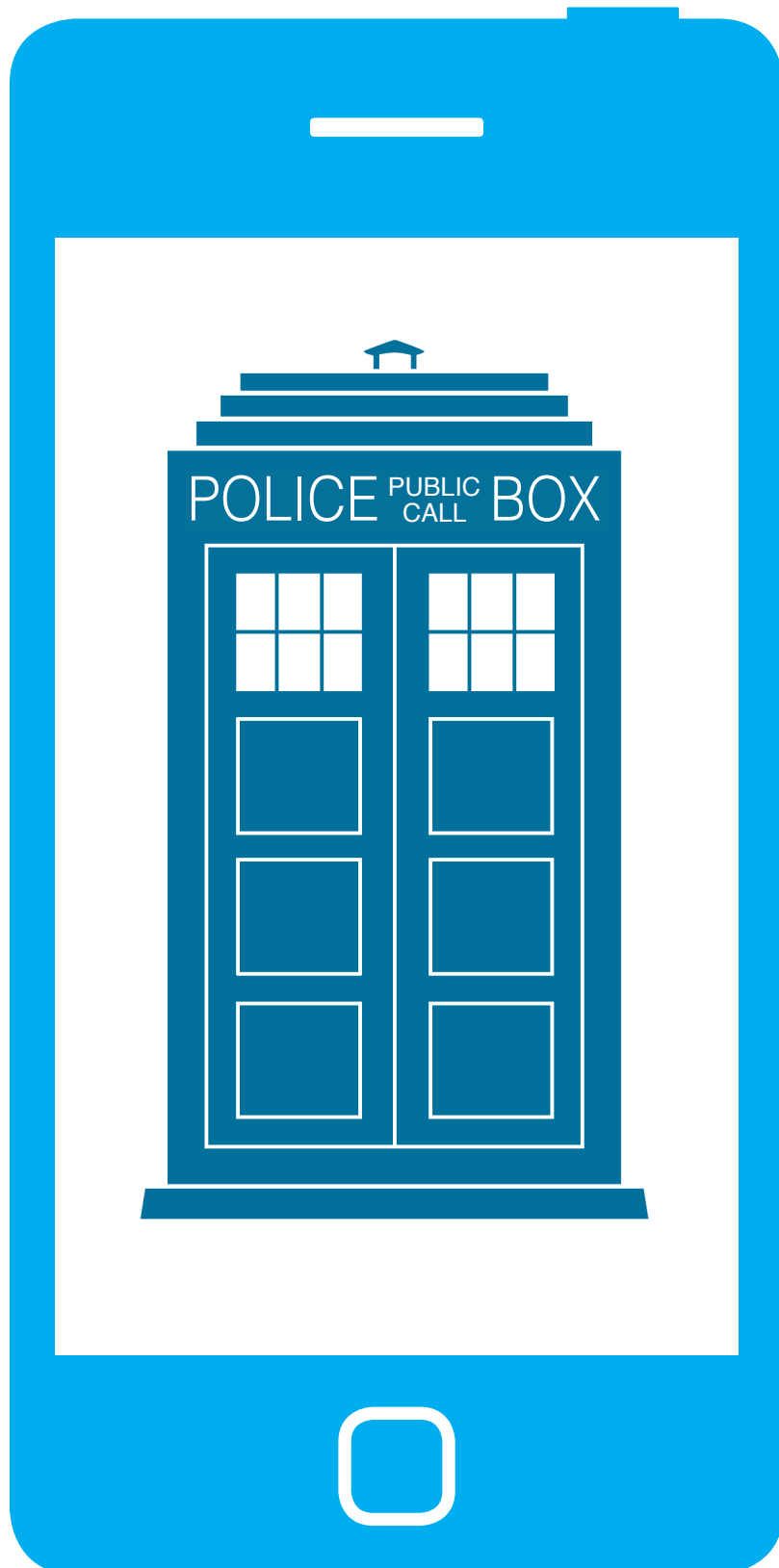


HOW NEW TECHNOLOGY IS
ENHANCING THE SERVICE
THE POLICE PROVIDE THE PUBLIC



INTRODUCTION

'Citizens increasingly capture what is happening around them on video, generating potential evidence of crimes. Policing has not yet caught up: the most common means of contacting the police remains the telephone. Police forces must follow the example of banks and retailers and do more to connect with citizens who increasingly live their lives on line... [T]he prize is there for the taking. Millions if not billions of savings. Thousands of police officer hours saved. Untold crimes solved and victims satisfied. And all by getting the fundamentals – information communications technology – right.'

– Rt Hon Theresa May MP, Home Secretary, 2016

Across the country, citizens are already using smartphone technology to report crime, and send photo and video evidence to the police for free.

This Report looks at the experiences of victims and witnesses who have used the Self Evident app to help the police tackle child abuse, domestic violence, terrorism and other crimes.

The Report demonstrates how this new technology is successfully helping the police to a) reduce crime, b) engage the public, and c) support victims and witnesses.

Self Evident is a free app provided by the social enterprise Just Evidence and promoted by the charity Witness Confidential. With over 13,500 registered users, the public's readiness to help the police in these ways is clear.

However, each year hundreds of thousands of people who are victims or witnesses of crime do not know that there is a simple, free and convenient way they can engage with and help the police.

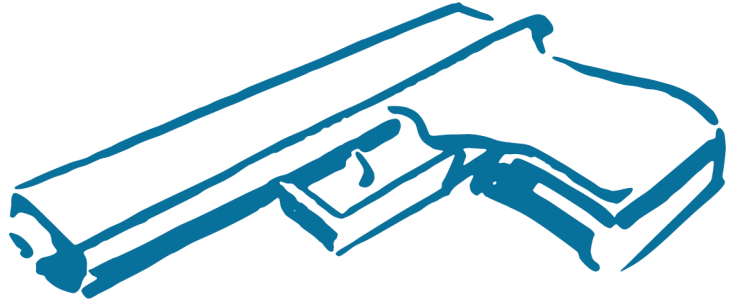
This Report demonstrates why the Home Secretary, Parliament and Police & Crime Commissioners should remedy this oversight and call on chief constables to inform people that they can report crime and send in evidence for free by smartphone app.



JOY'S STORY

CASE STUDY #1

Joy is a single mum who lives in social housing in the inner City. While there's a happy mix of people on the estate, there are a few characters who can act like they own it all - and if they're wound up or out of their head when they see you, you're in the wrong place at the wrong time.



When that happened to Joy late one evening, it all got out of hand. She ended up being threatened with a gun – and right in front of her five year old daughter, Chantelle. Joy knew if she didn't do something, she and Chantelle would end up sitting in the flat afraid to go out.

Joy didn't want to phone the police because Chantelle was asleep, so she looked on the internet to see if she could report it online. The Met police site didn't help and she had tried Crimestoppers before but nothing seemed to happen.

Seeing an ad for the Self Evident app, she decided to give it a go. While she liked the idea that it let her send photos to the police, what really attracted her was that the police would have her details and be able to get back to her. In fact just having the app on her phone started to give Joy back a sense of confidence that she could do something and she could get something done.

'And right in front of her five year old daughter'

The police got back to Joy quickly and said they'd do what they could to help. They put the man under observation and had grounds to arrest him a couple of days later. He got put inside for a few days and when he was back out, he seemed to have calmed down a bit.

Joy thinks a lot of young people would feel safer if they had this app so someone should tell them about it.

WHY PEOPLE CHOOSE TO REPORT CRIME USING THE SELF EVIDENT APP

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR VICTIM	<i>When I downloaded the app, it gave me a sense of security.</i>
MUGGING VICTIM	<i>It wasn't urgent but I wanted to report. I didn't want to block urgent calls to the police so Googled for it.</i>
TERRORISM WITNESS	<i>You can show when and where you were and attach photos.</i>
ABUSE VICTIM	<i>The app is a godsend. It gave me peace of mind.</i>
NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH WITNESS	<i>101 has a queuing system and when it's busy, you feel like you're in a telephone abyss – It's really annoying.</i>
MOTORING VICTIM	<i>Had a road traffic accident in another part of the country which I tried to report, but was passed from pillar to post. I wanted it on record what had happened so I used the app.</i>
SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIM	<i>My friend told me about it. It was a personal incident. Didn't feel comfortable talking about it, found easier to write it out.</i>
STREET VIOLENCE VICTIM	<i>I could record validated evidence.</i>
STALKING VICTIM	<i>It gives you confidence. It's almost like having a witness with you.</i>
CYBER BULLYING VICTIM	<i>I wanted to report without colleagues knowing as it was private and confidential. With the app my integrity was protected.</i>

JAMES' STORY

CASE STUDY #2

As there had been a number of break-ins in his neighbourhood, James installed CCTV at the front of his house. Before long he had images of a man walking along his street surveying vehicles and acting very suspiciously.

'Police responded within twenty minutes, thanking him for... using the app'

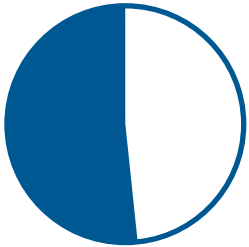
James imported these images into his Self Evident app at the touch of a button so he could send them to the police. To his delight, Greater Manchester police responded within twenty minutes, thanking him for the CCTV and for using the app to send them in.

Without the app, James says he never would have reported this incident as it's such a complicated and lengthy process to get CCTV footage to the police. The app had been recommended by a friend who's a police officer.

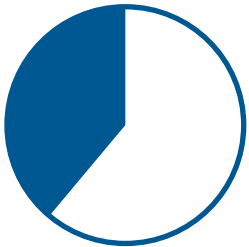
James thinks the app should let users flag more easily how important the matter is. That aside, he says Self Evident is a fantastic, effective app and that he recommends it to family and friends.



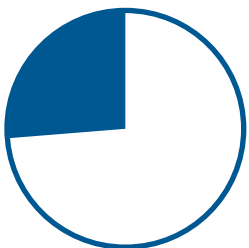
PUBLIC POLICY BENEFITS OF THE SELF EVIDENT APP



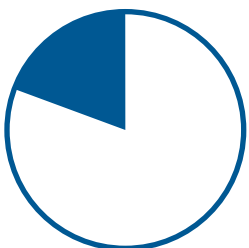
OVER A HALF
of reports have evidence attached.



OVER A THIRD
of users say they would not have reported the crime without the app.



OVER A QUARTER
of reports are sent by witnesses.



OVER A FIFTH
of victims are repeat or vulnerable victims.

SAM'S STORY

CASE STUDY #3

Sam was in her first year at a college. One evening out with some friends, she was introduced to Jack who immediately took a keen interest in her. Though Sam liked Jack, it was soon obvious he just wasn't her type. While still trying to be friendly, Sam had to make this clear to Jack as he proved very persistent.

*'By the time they came,
Jack had gone'*

At the end of term, Sam was out in the union bar with friends when Jack came and joined them. By the time they left they were all drunk and Jack came back to her flat and insisted on staying around and talking to her in her room. When she asked him to leave Jack refused and got quite angry. When Sam got up to go herself, Jack moved to stop her and then grabbed her by her throat and arms. Sam pushed him off and forced him out of her room and locked the door. As he banged on the door threateningly she called 999 and was told to ring security at the college. By the time they came, Jack had gone and when they left she wrote down what happened to try and make sense of how serious it was before going to sleep.

The next day after Jack had harassed her on social media, she downloaded the app – a friend who'd used it had told her about it - so she could report it to the police. She found it easy to copy and paste her account into the Self Evident report she sent the police.

Sam says the response from South Wales police was great – they were with her within an hour and arrested Jack. Though he was later released without charge, she felt much safer that she had gone on to formally report it and values Self Evident, as she wouldn't have done so without the app.



HOW USERS RATE KEY FEATURES OF THE SELF EVIDENT APP

94%

The ability to report crime by smartphone

70% very positive, 24% positive

96%

The ability to send the police evidence

75% very positive, 21% positive

91%

The ability to record an early reliable account

70% very positive, 21% positive

96%

The ability to validate their evidence

76% very positive, 20% positive

94%

The ability to track when the police access their report

68% very positive, 26% positive

96%

The ability to keep a copy of their report and evidence

77% very positive, 19% positive

SANDRA'S STORY

CASE STUDY #4

Sandra works in IT and more often than not she is using her laptop or smartphone to communicate with people. So it was second nature for her to look for an app to report to the police when a former partner started to abuse and harass her and it didn't justify a 999 call.

Sandra wanted to know that the information she gave to the police was going to be recorded in full and kept safe, in case the same thing happened again. Self Evident did that and it also let her send the police evidence to prove what he had done.

The response she received from the Gloucestershire Force really pleased Sandra. First she got an acknowledgement that they'd received her report which made her feel confident, then they rang her up and then two policewomen came round.

'With the app, I had a copy of my report in my secure account – not sitting on my phone or on my laptop.

'I no longer felt I needed to hide'

That's a good thing because I know all too well that people who suffer domestic abuse can have a kind of mental block. When things are going better in the relationship for a while, you kind of pretend to yourself that the abuse never happened. Keeping a record of what went on, the impact it had on you plus the evidence to back it up reaffirms to you that it really did happen. That it wasn't just a bad dream.

Domestic abuse tends to be something that happens again and again. It can be mentally and emotionally draining to write it all down, whereas with the app you can record and log events over a period of time, like I did. That makes it really valuable for repeat victims like me. Personally, I felt much more able to share the details of the abuse openly via the app than if I'd been reporting in person.

The fact that the app validates exactly when and where you recorded things is important because, in some domestic abuse cases, the perpetrator of the abuse can contact the police first, 'rubbish' the victim's account and pretend to be the victim himself. It's like having a digital diary where everything is independently dated. From the moment I reported using the app, I felt in charge of the situation and confident. The app and the police both helped me to stop feeling victimised. I no longer felt I needed to hide and instead I could get on with my life and my work. I felt safe with this app.'



WHY USERS VALUE THE KEY FEATURES OF THE SELF EVIDENT APP

CHILD ABUSE VICTIM
PARENT REPORTING

It's brilliant that you can report crime by smartphone, as it lets you log what happened really quickly and without anyone noticing - for all they know you could be playing a game on your phone.

HATE CRIME VICTIM

It's really helpful you can describe the event and capture the emotion of what happened.

CRIMINAL DAMAGE VICTIM

The great thing about the app is that you can send the police photos, all time and date stamped, and record your description of what has happened.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR
VICTIM

When I had to get a photo to the police before, they came round and I had to print it off. The app makes it easier.

FRAUD WITNESS

Your report is secure. You can go back to it if you need to.

THEFT WITNESS

Tracking police access is brilliant.

BLACK, MINORITY ETHNIC
WITNESS

Because the app lets you take photos and videos and lets you report in private, it will give women in communities like mine the confidence to make the initial report.

DAVE'S STORY

CASE STUDY #5



Dave has been a London cabbie for four years. He's proud of his job, not just because the black cab is a symbol of London around the world but because to be a cabbie you have to do the Knowledge and also demonstrate you're a safe driver.

Dave says that nine times out of ten when he sees dangerous driving, it's a minicab driver who's glued to his sat nav, totally blind to what's happening on the road. If it impacts directly on him and he has to take evasive action, Dave will let them know and if they apologise and wake up to what's on the road, he'll leave it at that. But when the odd one shouts abuse back or says so what, Dave's line is to report it as soon or later they'll cause a real accident.

'I could just film it out of the window and send that video straight to the police'

These days that's no so easy. Not long ago Dave had to drive across Peckham and Camberwell past three closed police stations before he found Brixton station was open. As to ringing the police, Dave says he gets passed around and ends up having to fill in a form which is not the easiest method for a self employed man trying to help the police. So for Dave the Self Evident app was a no brainer to use when he was cut up on Battersea Bridge by a mini-cab swinging right into Cheyne Walk. When the driver just shouted abuse back, Dave took a photo of his number plate and included that in the report he sent the police.

"I can see the app coming in handy if I had a passenger who'd had one too many and who got aggressive about being told to get out of the cab, which has happened to me on more than one occasion, or if I saw a fight going on in the street. I could just film it out of the window and send that video straight to the police, with no messing about. It doesn't take a minute and I'd be helping the police because they'd be getting evidence, all showing when and I where I filmed it."

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This Report draws on the 444 Self Evident crime reports that had been sent in England and Wales by April 2015. We rang or texted 306 users up to three times to invite them to participate. We got through to 160 of them (52%). 31 declined to take part and so the findings in this Report are based on the responses of 129 victims and witnesses.

ABOUT THE SELF EVIDENT APP

The app is promoted by the charity Witness Confident and provided by the social enterprise Just Evidence. Any profits will go to charitable anti-crime projects.

Self Evident is available for free on the iPhone and Android platforms. Reports to the police and for hate crime support are free. Self Evident crime reports are handled at central HQ in most force areas.

Since this research was conducted, a new build of the app has been launched with the support of The Mayor's Office for Policing And Crime in London and the Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner. This now enables repeat, disabled and vulnerable victims to identify themselves to the police; has new features for tackling hate crime; and provides enhanced accessibility.



Self Evident

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www.WitnessConfident.org

www.JustEvidence.org

For a PowerPoint presentation of this Report
please email hello@witnessconfident.org
