



The role of BlackBerry AtHoc in Operation Protector

Greater Manchester Police



Case Study

For the nation's police forces, resourcing major incidents is a vital component of public sector risk management. Staffing demands often call for co-operation across forces (mutual aid), as well as between teams, to deliver the right policing solution.

Manchester has hosted the Conservative party conference in alternating years since 2008. The four-day event attracts around 12,000 people including the prime minister and cabinet, party politicians and members, celebrities, trade unions, charities, businesses and – inevitably – protestors.

For Greater Manchester Police (GMP), the conference is one of the largest security operations in the policing calendar. Planning starts the preceding February and requires detailed co-ordination and resourcing. Typically, operations engage regular patrols, mounted police, dog handlers, drugs and firearms experts, and crowd control; as well as the military, royal and personal protective services for high profile individuals.

KNOWLEDGE SUPPORTS SAFETY

From the outset, information is the key to success and – historically – the operation's biggest pain point.

GMP initially deployed the BlackBerry® AtHoc® Critical Event Management (CEM) solution to manage staff welfare and resourcing issues during the pandemic. It later extended its use to core AtHoc® incident management functionality to drive significant efficiency, cost and time savings across the organisation.

With 700+ officers policing each day of the conference – 1,700 on demonstration day – getting timely, accurate information into the hands of specific teams poses an administrative challenge for Operation Protector. AtHoc has proven invaluable to this kind of large-scale policing; enabling the force to efficiently and effectively manage, alert and inform multiple internal and external teams through a single application.

TIMELY INFORMATION AT THE SCENE

Traditionally, each day of the six-day operation began with an all-hands slideshow briefing, delivered to the hundreds of officers on duty in one location. There was then no facility to update intelligence until the following morning, when a similar all-hands briefing took place. Officers on location were operating on yesterday's information, at best.

This year, officers – including those from the 11 forces offering mutual aid support to GMP – were equipped with AtHoc on their regular mobile devices.

GMP arranged one all-hands briefing on the first day of the operation. On subsequent days, AtHoc identified which personnel were about to start their shift and used its geo-alerting function to push a daily briefing download relevant to their location to the team's mobile devices. The briefing could include maps, CCTV images and observations on any protest activity or key nominals in the area. This facilitated smaller group street briefings, which were more focused, took less time and enabled better informed, more effective policing.

Further alerts could also be issued as the day progressed. Having the latest information to hand meant that the police could intervene earlier to maintain public order. For example, three nominals of note were detained after real-time information – including identifiable features or clothing specific to the day – supplied to officers in the right location made identification and arrest much easier.

During the five-day operation:

- 70 AtHoc alert messages supported team- and location-specific street briefings.
- 18,834 mobile devices received AtHoc alerts, delivering real-time information into officers' hands.
- 80 mutual aid officers from 11 forces outside of GMP successfully installed and used AtHoc without prior training.

ENABLING MULTI-FORCE OPERATIONS

Multi-force operations are essential but challenging. Information sharing and co-ordination across teams from different organisations and on different devices can impact the outcome of the entire operation.

As part of this year's planning, GMP gained authorisation and security clearance for AtHoc to be deployed by partnering forces. Once AtHoc was installed on whatever work devices were in use by police officers involved in the operation, they could instantly receive relevant information pushed to their groups.

With authorisation for the AtHoc app in place and templates established, future collaboration promises faster alignment and even greater efficiency advantage with the communications functionality available.

“Having the briefing and intelligence document to hand – and the fact it was updated daily – really helped on identifying persons of interest and with the early intervention... by allowing us to engage them immediately, putting them on the back foot.”

PC, Merseyside Police

“The AtHoc system worked well for us and came through on work devices with no problems. The app allowed us to be updated with the daily briefings and kept us in the know regarding protest activity and key nominals in the area. I can't fault it.”

PC, Staffordshire Police



Go to AtHoc.com or call [+44 \(0\)2078 455351](tel:+44(0)2078455351)



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