

Profile of PC Andy Smith



PC Andy Smith (<https://twitter.com/BrumUniCop>) arguably works on one of the most picturesque 'beats' in the UK in his role as Campus Police Officer for the University of Birmingham.

"It's a unique role, there's nothing quite like it", says Andy, who is a familiar sight as he patrols the University grounds on his bike. "It's taken me a while to get used to being in such a lovely location; this campus is like a neighbourhood in itself. It's a great place to work".

There are three main strands to his role; crime prevention - to minimise the chance of students becoming victims of crime, law enforcement - to target, manage and, if necessary, arrest people breaking the law on campus, and security - or as Andy puts it "thinking up new ways to improve safety".



Thanks to successful collaboration between police, campus security and the **Guild of Students** (<http://www.guildofstudents.com/sellywatch>), burglaries at student accommodation have fallen by 60 percent in the year 2011-2012. Andy is particularly proud of the success of a crime prevention initiative known as **Lojack** (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LoJack>), which the University adopted recently.

A tracking software programme is embedded to the microchip of items such as a laptop and sends regular signals which together make up a location trail. "Thanks to some city council funding, we have **given away 400 licences free of charge to first year students** (<http://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/local-news/your-communities-free-computer-software-4302915>) so far", says Andy, who works closely with his colleagues in the Edgbaston and Selly Oak Neighbourhood Police Teams.

He also employs 'tracker' bikes and laptops which are placed around campus and, if stolen, send a signal to a central control unit. "One tracker bike was taken to an address which we then searched and found six more bikes which had been stolen".

The start of a new academic year presents a particular challenge. "It's essential to get personal safety advice across to new students as soon as possible, not just about locking their doors and looking after their belongings but how to stay safe when doing things like walking home from the city centre". Andy continues, "I try to speak to as many first years as possible during **Welcome Week** ([welcome/index.aspx](http://www.welcome/index.aspx)) and work with the Guild of Students to achieve this. Hopefully, what the new students absorb at the start will take them safely through their entire time here".

Andy has a good rapport with Birmingham students. "What I like is that my job is a bit like the old-fashioned way of policing. You can have a quiet word, be less formal than is possible in many areas of Birmingham. Students do listen, they are respectful; they're a good bunch".