



Office of the Police and Crime

Commissioner

PO Box 688

PE29 9LA

Tel: 0300 333 3456

Email: [Cambs-pcc@cambs.police.uk](mailto:Cambs-pcc@cambs.police.uk)

Twitter: [@PCCCambs](https://twitter.com/PCCCambs)

Rt Hon Suella Braverman KC MP

Home Secretary

2 Marsham Street

London

SW1P 4DF

26<sup>th</sup> January 2023

Dear Home Secretary

**HMICFRS Report:** Digital forensics: An inspection into how well the police and other agencies use digital forensics in their investigations.

Under Section 55(5) of the Police Act 1996, as Police and Crime Commissioner I am pleased to provide my formal response to the report by HMICFRS entitled 'Digital forensics: An inspection into how well the police and other agencies use digital forensics in their investigations'.

Both the Chief Constable and I welcome the publication of this report, which followed an inspection by HMICFRS into Digital forensics. The inspection, the outcome of which was published by HMICFRS on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022, examined how well the police and other agencies use digital forensics in their investigations.

The Chief Constable's response to the recommendations is shown at Appendix 1.

I welcome the Chief Constable's response to the nine recommendations identified by HMICFRS developed to improve digital forensic services.

In this inspection, HMICFRS examined the provision of digital forensics in police forces and regional organised crime units. HMICFRS considered whether they understood and could manage their demand, and whether victims of crime were receiving a quality service. It was interesting to note that overall, HMICFRS found that the demand for digital forensic examinations is increasing year on year, and in some cases is outstripping the capacity of forces to respond effectively.

As APCC Digital Forensic Lead I recognise the importance of police forces meeting standards set by the Forensic Science Regulator. I also recognise the importance of forensics which underpins our entire criminal justice system. It is vital that improvements are made across the board so that policing does not fall behind in this digital revolution. There is a need to see urgent improvements made and standards met if we are to avoid delays in perpetrators being brought to justice and if we are to truly deliver a service that victims rightly expect and deserve. I continue to drive this agenda through my work with the APCC.

I trust my response, and that of the Chief Constable, provides reassurance regarding the commitment of both myself and Cambridgeshire Constabulary to improving digital forensic services.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Darryl Preston', written in a cursive style.

**Darryl Preston**

**Police and Crime Commissioner for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough**

Enc - Appendix 1 – Cambridgeshire Constabulary's response to HMICFRS report 'Digital forensics: An inspection into how well the police and other agencies use digital forensics in their investigations.'

## **Appendix 1**

**Cambridgeshire Constabulary's response to HMICFRS report 'Digital forensics: An inspection into how well the police and other agencies use digital forensics in their investigations.'**

### **HMICFRS recommendations:**

1. By April 2023, the National Police Chiefs' Council should appoint a dedicated lead for digital forensics, who should, by July 2023, develop a governance and oversight framework to better understand the national demand for digital forensic services.

**Force response: This recommendation is addressed to the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC).**

2. By December 2023, each force in England and Wales should develop a governance and oversight framework to better understand the local demand for digital forensic services.

**Force response: The Constabulary has a Digital Cyber Directorate (DCD) which is designed to professionalise the way the force deals with digital forensics. The DCD encompasses the Digital Forensic Unit (DFU), Digital Media Advisors (DMAs), and Digital Media Investigators (DMIs).**

**The DFU is made up of a team of Digital Forensic Examiners who deal with the examination of various types of devices and provide investigators with specialist advice regarding digital evidence. Demand for the DFU and performance are closely monitored. Weekly reports on the volume of demand, delays and backlogs, and staffing levels are reviewed by senior management. DFU performance is also monitored through monthly Departmental Senior Leadership Team Meetings, and at the Force Performance Board chaired by the Assistant Chief Constable.**

**The information provided through this framework has been used to inform investment decisions for the DFU to increase capacity and keep pace with technology as is practicable and affordable. A review has also recently been commissioned to review DFU practice and procedure in order to maximise productivity and effectiveness within the unit.**

3. By April 2024, the National Police Chiefs' Council, supported by the College of Policing, should encourage an increase in the number of dedicated, competent, and trained digital media investigators available to advise investigators and at crime scenes.

**Force response: This recommendation is addressed to the NPCC and the College of Policing.**

4. By September 2023, the National Police Chiefs' Council and all forces within England and Wales need to include the management of digital forensic kiosks in their governance and oversight frameworks.

**Force response: The core users of digital forensic kiosks within the Constabulary are Digital Media Advisors (DMAs). DMAs are trained to use kiosks and a large proportion of their role is to conduct kiosk downloads for the force. The DMAs are supervised by a Digital Media Coordinator (a Detective Sergeant) who sits within the force's Digital Cyber Directorate (DCD). Additional kiosks were obtained via funding from the Transforming Forensics programme to improve how forces respond to rape and serious sexual offences. These have been placed in proximity to our Child Abuse and Rape Investigation teams and section of staff within those teams have also been trained in the use of the kiosks which has been coordinated through the DCD.**

**A governance framework is in place and kiosk usage is reported on monthly at Departmental Senior Leadership Team Meetings and the Force Performance Board, alongside wider digital forensic performance.**

5. By April 2023, the Home Office should review digital forensic budgets and funding. Future additional funding should support the national digital forensic strategy and be well communicated and easier to access.

**Force response: This recommendation is addressed to the Home Office.**

6. By April 2023, the College of Policing should make sure all its digital courses have sufficient focus on investigations and victims' needs.

**Force response: This recommendation is addressed to the College of Policing.**

7. By June 2023, the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for digital forensics, the Home Office and relevant support services should provide guidance to all forces on the use of cloud-based storage and computing power.

**Force response: This recommendation is addressed to the NPCC.**

8. By November 2024, chief constables should integrate digital forensic services under their existing forensic science structure.

**Force response: The work of the Constabulary's Digital Forensic Unit (DFU) is overseen by the collaborated Bedfordshire Police, Cambridgeshire, and Hertfordshire Constabularies' Scientific Services Unit (BCH SSU) to ensure that it is delivered along similar lines to other forensic disciplines. A shared ISO Compliance Manager works within BCH SSU to ensure DFU compliance with the stipulations of ISO accreditation standards, which are subject to inspection by UKAS on an annual basis.**

9. By November 2024, the Home Office should work with the National Police Chiefs' Council, the College of Policing, and the private sector to design an alternative operating model that would provide effective and sustainable digital forensic services to support police investigations.

**Force response: This recommendation is addressed to the Home Office, the NPCC, and the College of Policing.**