



Digital Forensics Specialist Group (DFSG)

Minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2017, at the Home Office, 2 Marsham Street, Westminster, SW1P 4DF

1. Welcome and introductions

1.1 The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were received from Danny Faith, Roy Isbell, Lee Major, Neil Cohen and David Compton. A full list of attendees is available in Annex A.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2017 were approved as an accurate reflection of the discussion held.

3. Matters Arising

Action 5: Danny Faith to scope out options for running a Q&A workshop on gaining accreditation for digital forensics with F3.

3.1 This action was still in progress and Simon Iveson agreed to contact Danny Faith to further discuss the Q&A workshop.

Action 8: The Regulator and Tim Watson to discuss approaching the BSC and IET with a view to including digital forensics as a component of their teaching course.

3.2 It was agreed that the Regulator and Chair of the DFSG should write to the BCS Chartered Institute for IT and Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) with a view to including digital forensics as a component in their teaching courses. Action ongoing, owner transferred.

Action 9: The Regulator and Jennifer Housego to discuss the potential of engaging with stakeholders through online video content.

3.3 This action was on-going.

Action 10: DFSG members to provide David Compton with feedback on the reliability of mobile phone extractions within two weeks.

3.4 Whilst this action was complete it was agreed that Simon Iveson should engage with David Compton to discuss the feedback which was received.

3.5 All other actions were either complete or on the agenda for the current meeting.

4. Presentation on the digital careers pathway initiative (College of Policing)

4.1 A presentation was provided by Karl Rowley on behalf of the College of Policing on the digital careers pathway initiative. Karl Rowley indicated that the digital careers pathway initiative had been established in an attempt to prevent law enforcement agencies losing highly trained staff in the area of cyber digital to the private sector. Individuals were also being questioned in court about their experience and expertise and the project would attempt to put in place a solution to provide practitioners with the necessary credentials. The project would last between three and five years and was sponsored by the Home Office. DFSG members questioned how the initiative fitted with the requirement for accredited organisations to satisfy themselves of the competence of their staff, and whether there may be confusion regarding the word “expert” in relation to staff not considered to be expert witnesses. Both the NPCC Digital Forensic Portfolio and the Regulator’s office requested to be consulted at the relevant review stages.

5. Update on the Code of Practice and Conduct

5.1 The Forensic Science Regulator’s (the ‘Regulator’) Code of Practice and Conduct for forensic science providers and practitioners in the Criminal Justice System (Codes) version 3 would shortly be replaced by version 4. The Codes had been revised, primarily due to a change in the criminal practice directions, which required experts to sign a legal statement confirming they had adhered to a code of practice or conduct. Due to this change it was necessary to make the language within the Codes more precise and to include a cross reference to a statement of standard requirements.

5.2 The specialist group were also informed that the Codes contained greater details on occasional experts and infrequently used methods. ‘Forensic Science Provider’ had also been changed to ‘Forensic Unit’ to provide clarity that digital units within police forces were included within the scope of the Codes.

5.3 It was suggested that ‘remote storage’ should be removed from the Codes due to legal issues accessing ‘cloud storage’.

Action 1: Simon Iveson to remove remote storage from the Codes of Practice and Conduct version 4.

6. NPCC Landscape update

Progress on accreditation

6.1 An update was provided on the progress police forensic units had made towards gaining accreditation. Whilst it was expected that only a proportion of police digital forensic units would meet the October 2017 deadline for formal accreditation, considerable progress had been made in implementing standards in the remainder.

The position was being monitored by a central office supported by funding from the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC).

Expert vs factual reporting

6.2 The specialist group heard there was confusion amongst practitioners within the digital community in regards to the difference between an expert opinion and factual statement with an element of technical explanation, and the NPCC had a role to provide clarity. The NPCC were undertaking work to clarify the meaning of evidence of opinion for the digital community. A flow chart was presented that would be developed into more of a decision tree, which would clarify the difference between evidence of fact, evidence of opinion and evidence which required technical explanation.

Action 2: Members to provide written feedback to John Beckwith on the Expert Evidence Decision Tree by the NPCC Digital Forensics Portfolio.

Action 3: Mark Bishop to seek feedback from colleagues within the CPS on the Expert Evidence Decision Tree by the NPCC Digital Forensics Portfolio.

7. General discussion on accreditation of kiosks triage and tools deployed at scenes

7.1 Mobile phone kiosks and tools could be deployed at multiple sites, outside of traditional hi-tech crime areas, such as non fixed police sites or even at crime scenes. As such, this presented unique challenges for accreditation and the group was invited to discuss how accreditation for the use of such tool might be implemented. The issue for the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) was that they needed to put a boundary around what was being accredited, which was easier for fixed sites (e.g. a specific kiosk in a specific location) than for known sites (e.g. a police station) or unknown sites (e.g. a crime scene).

Action 4: The Regulator to have further discussion with UKAS on the accreditation of deployments of kiosks/triage tools to fixed sites, known sites and unknown sites.

8. Video Appendix update

8.1 Subtle changes had been made to the video appendix specifically in relation to viewing videos. The group agreed that the revised appendix could be issued.

9. Social media and open source sub-group update

9.1 A first meeting had been held and the group had a good breadth of expertise. Terms of reference had been developed and reviewed by the group. The next meeting of the group would be held at the national open source conference next month. The group would start by identifying the core processes and map these out in order for the group to understand where it should focus its attention.

10. Network forensics subgroup

10.1 The group had focused on collecting networking scenarios and activities and had sent out a questionnaire. Once a comprehensive list of activities had been collated, these would be prioritised and become the focus for standards and guidance.

11. Cell site update

11.1 Members heard that one of the issues with the accreditation pilot was that it was reported that there were flaws in the validation methodology, which meant the data produced more questions than answers over reliability. It would be necessary going forward to define a robust validation methodology for cell site analysis. Discussions were held about what should be included within the scope of this working group. However, it was decided that the chair of the sub group would be tasked with defining this.

12. AOB

12.1 The next meeting of the Digital Specialist group had not yet been decided.

Annex A

Present

Andrew Barnes	Centre for Applied Science and Technology, HO
John Beckwith	Staffordshire Police
Mark Bishop	Crown Prosecution Service (Brighton)
Steve Dickinson	College of Policing
Jennifer Housego	NPCC Open Source Nominee
David Johnston	Gloucestershire Police
Mark Stokes	Metropolitan Police (Chair)
Matthew Tart	CCL Group Digital Forensics
Duncan Thurlwell	NPCC Collision Investigation Nominee
Gill Tully	Forensic Science Regulator
Tim Watson	Warwick Cyber Security Centre

In attendance

Emma Burton-Graham	HO Science Secretariat
Simon Iveson	Forensic Science Regulation Unit, HO
Karl Rowley	College of Policing

Apologies

Neil Cohen	Centre for Applied Science and Technology, HO
David Compton	United Kingdom Accreditation Service
Danny Faith	First Forensic Forum (F3) Steering Committee
Roy Isbell	Digital Forensics Magazine
Neil Jones	University of Canterbury
Lee Major	United Kingdom Accreditation Service