



Minutes

Title of meeting	Forensic Policy Group Meeting		
Date	6 June 2016	Time	14:00-16:00
Venue	Broadway House Conference Centre, Tothill Street, London, SW1H 9NQ		
Chair	Stephen Webb (HO)	Secretary	Police Science and Technology Unit
	Copies to		
Attendees			
Home Office Officials		Kevin Morton (West Yorkshire Police)	
Dorian Thomas (Key Forensic Services)		David Ashbridge (BAE Systems Consultant)	
John Yeung (LGC)		Alison Fendley (FAL)	
Mark Pearce (LGC)		Inspector Steve Lyne (Dorset Police)	
Roger Robson (Forensic Access LTD)		Laura Fenton (BAE Systems Consultant)	
John Owen (ArroGen Forensics LTD)		Edgar Blazier (SYTECH)	
Robert Savage (Inta Forensics)		Felicity Carlysle – Davies (Forensic Science SIG)	
Graham Kissock (PSNI)			
Gary Pugh (MET Police)			
Fiona Cooper (ESG)			
Allison Jones			
(University of			
Central Lancashire)			
Barbara Daniel			
(Kings College			
Forensics Department)			
Denise Syndercombe			
(Kings College			
Forensics Department)			
Chris Hughes (DNA Ethics Group)			
Andrew Jackson (Staffordshire University)			
Joanne Ashworth (EMSOU)			
Andrew Price (EMSOU)			
Paul Hackett (Key Forensic Services)			
John Beckwith (Staffordshire Police)			
Professor Gillian Tully (Forensic Science Regulator)			
Gemma Gyles (Home Office, Office of the Biometrics Commissioner)			
Paul Smith (University of Portsmouth)			

1. Introductions and Welcome

1.1 The Chair welcomed the group and introduced himself as the Home Office Director for Law Enforcement Programmes. He explained that the meeting was the first Forensic Policy Group (FPG) in a new format and that in the interests of transparency the minutes would be published on Gov.UK.

1.2 The Chair summarised that the purpose of the group was to discuss the implementation of the forensic and biometrics (once published) strategies and current policy issues.

2. Update on Forensic Strategy

2.1 The Chair informed the group that there had been a positive evidence session on the Forensic Strategy with the Science and Technology Committee. The Committee had expressed concern about sustainability of innovation in the forensic market, and the Chair intended to write to the Committee setting out the long term vision.

2.2 A brief progress update on actions in the Forensics Strategy was provided.

3. Transforming Police Forensics and Biometrics

3.1 The session was introduced by explaining the recent work reviewing current police forensic services. It was explained that the aim of the programme was to identify how digitally delivered forensics could improve and sustain local service delivery and to provide local teams with earlier access to the latest technology to deliver rapid and robust forensic services which met the current and future needs of the public.

3.2 Scoping work was being led by the police, supported by the Home Office, with a view to the programme presenting a high level proposal for police leaders to consider at a Summit in July.

3.3 John Beckwith, as Communications and Engagement lead for the programme, explained that as the national policing lead in this area, Chief Constable Debbie Simpson had written to Chief Constables to set out what the key benefits of a JFBS might be. Themes emerging from discussions included real time forensics, delivery of forensic products at point of need, faster results, real time investigations and swifter criminal justice outcomes. This could lead to improvements in police capability, capacity and efficiency.

3.4 John said that this built on the opportunities presented by the Home Office Biometrics programme and acknowledged the need to consider ethics throughout.

3.5 Work was continuing to develop the proposal, which would consist of a concept for police leaders to consider rather than a detailed proposition. If the concept was agreed, the programme would then submit a bid to the Police Transformation Fund in order to develop a more detailed model.

3.6 A number of issues were highlighted during the discussion, including the need to collaborate at the earliest opportunity with a wide range of stakeholders in forensics beyond policing as well as with other parts of the criminal justice system (particularly CPS and courts). It was also suggested that the programme needed to look wider than digital forensics and consider more generally the direction of travel for the forensics market, as well as the importance of public concerns regarding privacy. The Chair agreed that privacy considerations were vital, and explained that a number of privacy impact assessments were currently being completed within the Home Office, including for the Home Office Biometrics Programme.

3.7 Questions were also asked about continuation of the Policing Innovation Fund (which will be combined with the Police Transformation Fund) and whether there was still a commitment to the private sector forensics market. Police leads for the programme explained that a healthy private sector market was fundamental to the delivery of transformation in forensics.

3.8 Concerns were raised by some of the Suppliers in attendance about the shrinking of the external forensic market and particular, the risks for niche suppliers.

3.9 Police colleagues explained that the JFBS would encourage even greater collaboration than before. Therefore, police forces might choose to work with other forces to develop similar joint procurement arrangements as with the national framework but without having the restriction of having to use a nationally defined framework that might not suit their own operating models

4. **Future challenges**

4.1 The Chair asked the group for views on how it could best collaborate to address the biggest policy challenges in forensic and biometrics.

4.2 In subsequent discussion, participants raised the following issues as being worthy of future discussion:

- the status of facial imaging (particularly in relation to quality standards);
- Better collaboration with partners across the CJS to improve ways of feedback.
- potential for the group to discuss developments of the European Forensic Science Area 2020;
- ways of addressing a lack of coordination across the industry around innovation, with support and facilitation from the Forensic Science Special interest group; and potential to drive innovation through process re-engineering as well as new technology.

4.3 The Chair proposed discussing the issues on the European Forensic Science Area 2020 and consideration of a science and innovation strategy at the next meeting. Group members who would like to be involved in the development of discussion papers for the meeting should contact the Secretariat at Forensic@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

4.4 The next meeting will be scheduled for December.

Police Science and Technology Unit
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