



Biometric Forensics Ethics Group  
Home Office  
London  
SW1P 4DF

May 2020

Dear Ethics Group members,

### **Commissioning letter 2020 / 2021**

With thanks to the Group for their work in 2019/20, I am writing to you in my capacity as sponsor to set out the areas I would like the Group to focus on in the next year. I trust that it provides sufficient information for you to plan your work programme in detail.

We have outlined the working groups below and as now, each group will be supported by a Home Office policy lead.

### **Commission**

We would like the Group to organise working groups around the following themes:

**1. Home Office Biometrics (HOB) programme:**

- a. we would like you to continue to advise the HOB programme and related Home Office initiatives on projects at an early stage of their development. We would also like you to continue to advise on HOB Data Protection Impact Assessments.

**2. Use of large and complex datasets:**

- a. we would like you to continue to advise projects considering the adoption and/or use of explainable data-driven technology and contribute to guidance being developed for data scientists. We welcome the suggestion in the Chair's 2019 commission summary that the Group provide a process for ethical consideration of emerging Home Office

projects utilising machine learning and input into a discipline-specific ethics framework for use by those commissioning, designing, and using machine learning applications.

- b. utilising the work underway to review and update the data ethics framework from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, we would also like the Group to develop a data ethics advisory service providing ethical guidance and support for Home Office projects. We would like the Group to work with us to define the terms of service and work through several use cases to test the proposed process (such as the amalgamation and use of data from a range of sources).
- c. once fully established, we would look to this group to provide input into the development of further discipline-specific ethics guidance and procedures.

**3. Biometrics and Forensics access and retention:**

- a. advise on approaches to collection, use, retention and deletion of different biometrics and of extracted digital forensic material
- b. advise on ethical issues regarding the use of extracted information obtained through digital forensics investigations in large datasets for the purposes of data-driven policing and/or the training of algorithms to improve digital forensics tools.

In addition to being represented at the Forensic Information Databases Strategy (FINDS) Board, we may also ask you for ad hoc advice on forensic information and database policy and projects.

My team will attend BFEG meetings and we will work closely with the secretariat to help you manage this commission. I look forward to working with you again over the next 12 months.

Kind regards,

**Alex MacDonald**  
BFEG Policy Sponsor

**CC:**