



Forensic Science Regulator

Digital Forensics Specialist Group (DFSG) meeting

Note of the meeting held on 2nd February 2026 online via MS Teams

1. Welcome

- 1.1.1 The Chair welcomed the group; members gave a short introduction.
- 1.1.2 The Regulator gave a short introduction, this is the first time the Regulator has attended the DFSG, the Regulator thanked members for their time and emphasised the importance of digital forensics. The Regulator attended until agenda item three.

2. Minutes

- 2.1.1 The Chair invited comments on the minutes from the DFSG meeting held on 08/07/2025, which had been circulated in advance. No corrections or comments were raised, and OFSR will publish the finalised 08/07/2025 minutes.

3. Scene Setting

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The Regulator outlined that he inherited a robust and well-developed Code of Practice Version 2 (the Code) from the previous Regulator and expressed his appreciation for this work. He noted, however, that the landscape is shifting due to Police Reform and other developments, creating a need for the group to revisit existing topics and potentially introduce new areas of focus.
- 3.1.2 The Regulator introduced the following four key areas:

3.2 Using the Code of Practice (the Code)

- 3.2.1 Version 2 of the Code came into force in October 2025 and continues to embed across policing. Some forces are still working through the practicalities of implementation in forensic science activities which came into scope for the first time such as cell site analysis. The Regulator asked the group to take a strategic view of how Version 2 of the Code is operating in practice and to identify areas requiring clarification or further work.

3.3 The Quality System

- 3.3.1 The Regulator highlighted ongoing debate about how effectively the current quality system is functioning, looking at where assurance works in digital forensics. The Regulator emphasised the primary driver on assurance is controlling risk.
- 3.3.2 An emphasis was placed on the need for clear risk capture, noting that risks must be identified across forensic units, impacts on victims, and the wider criminal justice system, which increasingly endorses the use of the Code even though there is not always a shared understanding of how risk is defined.

3.4 Innovation

- 3.4.1 The Regulator acknowledged the colossal level of innovation within the digital space and referenced the strong digital emphasis within the recent Police Reform white paper.
- 3.4.2 The Regulator highlighted the need to examine proposed tools such as automated note-taking and audio transcription, as these feed into forensic analysis. He noted that regulators in other sectors (e.g., medicine) have raised concerns about current levels of transcription accuracy, including the Food and Drug Administration deeming many systems not fit for purpose last year, prompting the question of whether such tools are reliable enough for witness statements. He emphasised that while the white paper assumes these areas are covered, they may not be, and further scrutiny is required.

3.5 Potential Changes to the Code

- 3.5.1 While Version 2 of the Code was designed to have longevity, the Regulator noted that the environment is evolving rapidly and the goal posts are moving. As a result, the group may need to consider what can be addressed within the current code and whether revisions or a future version may be necessary.
- 3.5.2 Attrition of trained digital forensics staff was highlighted by the Regulator, particularly those working with child sexual abuse and sexual violence material, where cumulative exposure to distressing content is significantly impacting wellbeing. The Code may need to support any tools that assist grading for example. The Code may need to consider concerns regarding data governance, including cloud use and ownership of data, and how these align with emerging government-wide AI and data regulations.
- 3.5.3 While geolocation is addressed in the current Code, under cell site analysis, this may be an area for the group to examine further for other devices such as drones.
- 3.5.1 If the Regulator decides on a new version of the Code to be issued in 2027, reverse engineering to account for consultation as set out in the Forensic Science Regulator Act 2021, adding time to action consultation comments, the group should assume that proposed changes would need to be developed by the end of 2026.

3.6 Emerging Technology

- 3.6.1 The Chair invited questions from the group. A member noted that while emerging technologies represent an evolution of existing practices, stronger control and oversight are essential, highlighting concerns that large volumes of new technology are being offered to policing without sufficient testing, validation, or checks and balances, and this group should consider how best to address this.

3.7 DIG 200 Discussion

- 3.7.1 A group member emphasised that there are two main factors of geolocation, the analysts and those who do the surveying themselves. The group member asked if there will be a separate group for geolocation, as this is a specialist area, and whether in principle people are open to frameworks similar to the CCTV framework but acknowledging that it is a very different level of risk for both analysts and surveyors.
- 3.7.1 OFSR advised that a dedicated group for cell site and geolocation is needed, while noting the importance of avoiding silos due to the many cross-cutting areas involved.
- 3.7.2 A DIG 200 Working Group (DIG200WG) already exists within the Interpretation Specialist Group, with strong representation from the cell site, analyst, and RF communities.
- 3.7.3 Instead of creating a new group, OFSR recommended appointing a formal chair for the existing DIG 200 group.

Action 1: OFSR to consider how the proposed DIG200WG would report back to DFSG, if there is a suitable member or if OFSR would be the conduit.

4. Members Update

- 4.1.1 The Chair for the DIG 100 Subgroup reported on the inaugural November 2025 meeting, attended by the DFSG Chair, noting strong representation from the commercial sector and policing. This first meeting focused on establishing priorities and determining how the subgroup will feed into the strategic DFSG, laying the groundwork for future activity.
- 4.1.2 A group member detailed attendance at the Digital Forensics Strategy Board, which has revisited its performance framework.
- 4.1.3 They examined UKAS accreditation schedules in more detail and introduced some KPI-style questions, particularly around how long validation takes for forces.
- 4.1.4 It was highlighted that accreditation is often viewed only at a high level, so this was broken down to what the activity includes.

- 4.1.5 This breakdown showed how the individual tasks build up to a much larger and more complex workload.
- 4.1.6 Some of the collected data was shared and the report will be complete in the next few weeks and can be shared with the group in due course.
- 4.1.7 A group member expressed interest in seeing similar analysis applied to the CCTV and audio space. At present, their focus has mainly been on annual data returns to understand investigation outcomes, and no broader analysis has been carried out, particularly regarding accreditation progress. They highlighted that this gap applies across both video and audio areas.

5. DFSG Work Programme

- 5.1.1 The Chair emphasised the need for a more structured way of prioritising the numerous issues and opportunities within the work programme, proposing the development of a risk and opportunity map to help the group systematically identify priorities, track changes over time, and ensure discussions remain focused. This could be developed further outside the meeting.

5.2 UKAS Membership discussion

The Chair invited views on UKAS group membership. The consensus was to keep the current arrangements of DFSG unchanged, with agreement that UKAS will have representation on the DIG100SG.

5.3 Governance and Group Roles

- 5.3.1 The Chair led a discussion on how the group fits within the wider governance structure. It was clarified that the DIG100SG provides advice and insight to support this group's strategic oversight and its recommendations to the FSR. DIG100SG gathers information, highlights risk and brings together relevant issues to help manage the wide range of topics. The DIG100SG Chair and OFSR confirmed this understanding, agreeing that governance decisions and recommendations should come through this group.

5.4 Discussion on Engagement with UKAS

A member highlighted the importance of distinguishing between issues caused by the accreditation standards themselves and those arising from UKAS processes. It was noted that some challenges relate to how well certain standards fit digital forensics, while others stem from variation in assessment approaches. This distinction was raised to support clearer understanding of where specific concerns originate.

The group noted that different aspects of accreditation challenges relate both to schedule transparency and to consistency of assessment, and that these may require input from different individuals within UKAS. Any resulting work would be channelled through the DIG100SG group in the first instance before returning to this group as needed. Members also recognised that some concerns raised by forces relate to the practical application of standards rather than UKAS processes alone, underlining the value of open dialogue to understand issues from both perspectives.

5.5 Information Flow and Governance Across Groups

The group discussed the need for clearer communication pathways between the DFSG, DIG 100, NPCC Working Groups, and other digital forensics groups. Members highlighted concerns about conversations happening in separate spaces and the risk of duplication or gaps in escalation. It was noted that clearer routes are needed to ensure learning, issues and risks from practitioner-level groups, NPCC activity and other networks are consistently fed into the DFSG, enabling effective prioritisation. The Chair acknowledged the importance of raising the profile of the group and ensuring that relevant issues are brought forward.

5.6 AI-Powered Review Tools

The group discussed questions around the scope of new AI-enabled review tools, particularly how they relate to existing code requirements and digital forensic activities. Members noted increasing external developments, including tools being introduced into policing through national programmes,

and the need for clear processes to ensure such technologies are appropriately assessed before adoption. It was recognised that this may require a more structured approach or pipeline for introducing new capabilities in a way that aligns with quality expectations. The group noted that related work is ongoing within policing and academic partnerships, and that updates and insights from these activities can be brought into the DFSG to support future considerations.

5.7 DIG 100 Priorities and Triage Framework

The Chair introduced the DIG100SG prioritisation list which can be found at Annex A, the inclusion of work on the digital triage framework was noted. Members reviewed the ranked concerns submitted by DIG100SG attendees. The group agreed that accreditation approach and scheduling should remain the initial priority, with UKAS engagement to support this. It was noted that this area covers several elements, including the structure and granularity of accreditation schedules, the consistency of assessments, and transparency around requirements. Members acknowledged that these concerns are commonly raised across forces but are not solely technical in nature.

Officer review of content was highlighted as the second priority and discussed, including its overlap with emerging tools, cloud-based review solutions and AI-enabled analytics. The group recognised that this area is broad and may extend beyond triage into wider investigative processes. It was agreed that DIG100SG should consider this work area, considering its linkage with the ongoing triage framework review.

5.8 Clarification of DIG 100 Priority

It was recognised that digital triage and officer review extend beyond tool use into wider investigative processes, which can lead to differing approaches where limited guidance exists.

Action 2: DIG100SG will be asked to break down the component issues, engage with UKAS where relevant, and return with a clearer problem statement to support prioritisation and further consideration by this group.

5.9 Review of Digital Triage Framework and Scope of Triage

Members noted that the proposed triage framework raises important questions, including what constitutes triage, how its outputs should be interpreted, and how it relates to full forensic examination. The group agreed that DIG100SG should be asked to review the proposed framework in detail, identify any gaps or potential risks, and provide feedback to the DFSG.

It was noted that differing interpretations of triage could have operational and accreditation implications, highlighting the importance of consistent terminology and approach. The group agreed to keep the initial tasks for DIG100SG:

- 5.9.1 Breaking down the issues within accreditation approach and scheduling (including engagement with UKAS), and
- 5.9.2 Reviewing the digital triage framework output from the Digital Forensics Kiosk and Triage Working Group.

6. Agreed Actions

- 6.1.1 Actions from the previous meeting were addressed within this meeting. The DFSG action log will be updated to reflect this.

Action 1 (July 2025) - The group to consider whether any critical areas of expertise might be missing, or if there are additional types of expertise that should be represented within the group.

Action 2 (July 2025) - Group members to share which other groups they are part of to avoid a duplication of efforts and to ensure existing structures are used effectively.

7. Risks and Opportunities – Horizon Scanning

7.1 NPCC Validation Workstream

- 7.1.1 A brief update was provided on the NPCC validation workstream, noting growing interest from the reform programme and the need to ensure alignment with DIG100SG priorities. The group was advised of potential

pressures between policing-focused work and wider sector involvement, and a potential risk was highlighted around maintaining consistency across related workstreams.

7.2 Validation Guidance Opportunities

- 7.2.1 OFSR noted that several existing validation guidance documents covering digital validation, general validation and the reuse of evidence remain scheduled for future alignment. It was recognised that updates to the Code mean the existing documents no longer fully align and will require future review to ensure consistency.
- 7.2.2 OFSR highlighted that while the Code has been updated to accommodate more centralised approaches to validation challenges do remain, such as ensuring consistent understanding of method limitations and effective transfer of learning to implementing organisations. The importance of structured processes to support successful adoption, and of ensuring that commercial delivery partners are not excluded from future arrangements, was also emphasised.
- 7.2.3 A member noted that revising the validation guidance presents a significant opportunity to improve accreditation outcomes. It was observed that substantial effort is currently spent on validation activity, sometimes disproportionate to the risk being addressed, and that clearer guidance on adopting validation from other organisations could streamline processes. Members also highlighted the importance of effective dissemination of validation learning within organisations and the need for better feedback mechanisms on what approaches are working in practice.

7.3 Review of Exemptions

- 7.3.1 The group noted recent issues arising from some existing exemptions in the Code, including those relating to routine extraction from police-generated systems. It was highlighted that assumptions about underlying system checks and validation have not always been met in practice, leading to potential areas of risk. Members agreed that some exemptions may benefit

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from review, particularly considering wider work on triage and scene-based activity, which may provide opportunities to revisit or refine them.

8. **AOB**

8.1.1 There was no AOB. The Chair thanked members and closed the meeting

9. **Date of next meeting**

Action 3: OFSR and Chair to organise next online meeting, with intention of DFSG meeting being more frequent than every six months.

Annex A

Please rank the following items in order of priority, with 1 being the highest

