



# RESPONSE BY THE PCC TO HMICFRS INSPECTIONS OF CLEVELAND POLICE

## INSPECTION DETAILS

**Title of Inspection** – How well the police and other agencies use digital forensics in their investigations

**Date Inspection Published** – 1 December 2022

Type of Inspection:

- Cleveland Specific  National  
 Follow Up  Thematic  
 Partner Inspection

Is Cleveland Police quoted in the Report?  Yes  No

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

The inspection examined the provision of digital forensics in police forces and regional organised crime units. Whether demand was understood, could it be managed and whether victims of crime were receiving a quality service.

Digital forensics is a branch of forensic science which includes the recovery and examination of digital devices. The demand for digital forensic examinations was increasing year after year and in some cases outstripped the capacity of forces to respond effectively, with demand unlikely to stop. Noting that most, if not all, crimes have some form of digital footprint.

The inspection found that nationally, there was an inconsistent approach to how forces recovered and examined digital devices, senior force leaders didn't fully understand the current demand. Resulting in long delays in some investigations and victims and witnesses losing access to their mobile phones for many months.

The report made 9 recommendations including the following for each police force in England and Wales  
Recommendation 2 – by December 2023 each force should develop a governance and oversight framework to better understand the local demand for digital forensic services

Recommendation 8 – by November 2024 chief constables should integrate digital forensic services under their existing forensic science structure

## FORCE RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

All new reports into the Force follow a specific process which involves holding a plenary session with relevant stakeholders to discuss the actions and agree how they will be progressed. The outcome from this session is reported to the Deputy Chief Constable for approval; progress is then monitored through governance meetings until such a time as the action is considered complete. The process for closing actions is depicted by HMICFRS as they award each action a level and the Force complies with the appropriate course of action.

The Force has received and accepted the Digital Forensics report and recommendations. A plenary session has taken place and the following 3 Force actions have been discussed:

1. *Each force in England and Wales should develop a governance and oversight framework to better understand the local demand for digital forensic services.*

The force is currently going through a restructure and Governance meetings are being re-aligned accordingly, once the appropriate meeting is identified digital forensics will be added to the agenda and discussed at each meeting.

2. *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.*

A wider discussion is taking place in relation to the kiosks as they need to be fit for purpose, this work is currently being carried out by the digital forensics team.

3. *Chief constables should integrate digital forensic services under their existing forensic science structure.*

This action is considered complete as the Force's Digital Forensic Services have been embedded in the forensic structure for over eight years.

The recommendations will be discussed and updated over the coming months and submitted for closure at the appropriate time.

## **PCC RESPONSE TO INSPECTION**

Comment by the PCC:

I welcome HMICFRS' report into the polices use of digital forensics. High quality and accessible Digital Forensics is an expectation within communities.

The PCC has checked and has assurance that the overall process by which recommendations and Areas for Improvement (AFIs) are managed and monitored by the Force is efficient and effective. The Audit Committee will also maintain regular oversight of the programme of recommendations and AFIs.

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