

KATE GREEN
**DEPUTY MAYOR
OF GREATER
MANCHESTER**

Rt Hon Suella Braverman MP,
Secretary of State for the Home Department
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

25th January 2023

Dear Home Secretary,

SUBJECT: HMICFRS Digital Forensics Inspection report

I write in response to the publication for above report that reviewed how well the police and other agencies use digital forensics in their investigations.

I understand that whilst Greater Manchester Police (GMP) was not subject to a field inspection visit as part of this review, HMICFRS did visit the Force as part of the evidence gathering process. I am pleased to see reference within the report of GMP's innovative practice in automated processes for the examination of devices, related to child sexual exploitation, as well as its approach to managing digital crime scenes.

It was encouraging to review evidence that all forces had a triage process to prioritise the examination of devices and plans to examine victims' devices with 24 hours, in rape or serious sexual offence case. However, it is evident that demand for digital forensic examinations is increasing year on year and in some cases outstripped the capacity of forces to respond effectively. This demand increase is unlikely to stop and it is important that the police service work harder to understand current demand and put effective governance and performance structures in place.

The report identifies three recommendations for policing. I have provided a response to these below: forces.

Recommendation 1 - By December 2023, each force in England and Wales should develop a governance and oversight framework to better understand the local demand for digital forensic services.

I am confident that GMP recognise that this is an area where demand is increasing rapidly both in terms of numbers and also the variety and complexity of the analysis required.

Through the GMP Plan on a Page (POAP) improvement work, there is an ongoing review of Digital Forensic Intelligence and Investigation services, capability, and capacity. The review work will improve the overall understanding of demand for Digital Forensic Services and ensure an appropriate and effective governance and oversight framework is in place. This includes the implementation of an updated

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case management system and mapping of potential and future demand to inform new technology and operating models.

The process will also provide a holistic review of Digital Forensics, Cyber Crime, Digital Media Investigators and other associated areas, such as CCTV and Video Evidence Retrieval and Analysis (VERA).

Future delivery of this service will be managed through the delivery of a Force Digital Forensic Intelligence and Investigation Strategy which will include the provision of an effective governance and oversight framework.

Recommendation 2 - By September 2023, 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.

I am aware that due to previous risk assessments and reviews of potential benefits, GMP does not currently use digital forensic kiosks. This is due to the capability limitations of the kiosk model and the challenges and risks associated with the potential for missed information, as was highlighted within the HMICFRS report.

Currently, all mobile phones requiring analysis are submitted into the central Digital Forensic Investigation Unit (DFIU) which enables immediate submission and return within 24 hours.

That said, I understand that the use of digital forensic kiosks or any other digital forensic equipment (currently or in the future) will be incorporated into the Digital Forensic Intelligence and Investigation review. This will ensure that there is effective management, governance and oversight incorporated into the recommendations and strategy.

Recommendation 3 - By November 2024, chief constables should integrate digital forensic services under their existing forensic science structure.

I can confirm that the DFIU within GMP currently sits as part of the forensic science structure.

However, I am aware that there are some digital forensic functions which are currently undertaken outside of this structure by other units in the Force. I am confident that the ongoing Digital Forensic Intelligence and Investigation review will ensure that there is a full understanding of these areas and that they are incorporated into the DFIU as part of the forensic science structure to ensure that GMP are fully compliant with this recommendation.

I will continue to monitor progress of the review and action taken against the recommendations of the report to ensure GMP has the capacity and capability to manage this function effectively.

Yours sincerely



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Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester

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