

DIGITAL FORENSICS SPECIALIST GROUP

Notes of the fifteenth meeting, held at 11:00am on Tuesday 16 December 2014 at the Home Office, London

1.0: Introduction

1.1 The Chair welcomed all to the fifteenth meeting of the group, especially Gill Tully, the new Forensic Science Regulator (FSR).

1.2 See Annex A for full list of attendees and apologies.

1.3 The FSR stated that the work of the DFSG was very important, as forces still had a long way to go in terms of digital forensics. The FSR continued to rely on the DFSG to ensure that the standards were pitched at the right level for all providers of digital forensic services, and the timescales set for accreditation were appropriate.

1.4 Concerns were raised about the future of digital forensics, with customers reducing costs in the age of austerity. The FSR reiterated to the DFSG that quality standards were an integral part of forensic science, rather than optional. Providers were expected to look at creativity in delivering quality. Saving money should not be at the cost of quality.

1.5 It was accepted that there were pressures politically and financially to reduce costs. Digital forensics not being considered as a “science” was also an issue. However, there was a significant price to be paid for getting things wrong, such as with miscarriages of justice. It was therefore necessary to find ways to do things differently in order to save money. It was important to get the balance right.

2.0: Minutes of the last meeting

2.1 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

3.0: Accreditation Pathways

3.1 Accreditation pathways could be a way forward to deliver quality and reduce costs. The FSR still wanted to promote and support innovation without standards being seen to stifle it. The FSR met with Chief Constable Chris Sims and Deputy Chief Constable Nick Baker, the national policing lead for digital forensics, and will be holding a follow-up meeting for further discussions on accreditation pathways.

3.2 They planned to create expert networks within the digital community to deal with the challenges of delivering standards. Streamlined Forensic Reporting (SFR) was about encouraging a real focus on what was happening

around crime scenes, especially around the recovery of devices. It was necessary for standards to apply, to ensure the integrity of the evidence. The digital portfolio had to be taken forward with quality standards as the focus of the approach.

3.3 It was recognised that digital forensics was still outside the governance of forensics in several forces. It was necessary to have a coherent view of the digital forensics landscape, and a common understanding of what and where digital forensics was, to aid the delivering of a coordinated and proportionate approach to quality standards. There was a need to gain an understanding of the challenges over the next ten years, and explore local, regional and national delivery models for quality standards.

3.4 The approach adopted involved:

- The FSR's Code of Practice
- Working with the FSR and UKAS
- A National Digital Forensics Portfolio board was now in place.
- The outline strategy had been agreed.
- The strategy should fit in with the HO's forensic strategy, and the national forensic strategy tactical plan.
- The CAST commissioning process had been completed.
- The Expert Network was due to meet in January 2015.
- There would be a consultation with stakeholders with regard to accreditation pathways.

3.5 The pathways involved combining resources to promote greater consistency in approach and other efficiencies. This meant earlier compliance to the codes and the realisation of the benefits of accreditation. The first step for the accreditation pathways was to establish a cross-digital business expert network and to produce a detailed and scalable plan of the work. This step should also target examination of the imaging functions of major digital forensic tools.

3.6 The second step involved a consolidated community approach. With this approach, lead forces will facilitate accreditation of different areas, supported by a central body to ensure consistency and transferability.

3.7 It was accepted that standards ought not to be seen as a block to innovation and needed to be presented and positioned in the right way. The requirement to validate procedures needed to be balanced against promoting innovation and recognising the speed of change in the field. The Streamlined Forensic Reporting (SFR) approach might offer a way forward, because it allowed for a meeting of experts to agree which parts of the evidence might

not be fully tested. The requirement to meet quality standards should not hinder the development of new techniques. The Code of Practice also covered the competence of experts and this included the ability to explain the technique being used and an understanding of its limitations.

3.8 The DFSG agreed that there was value in having a policing practitioner in the group and that the National Crime Agency (NCA) needed to be invited. Keith Bristow or Andy Archibald should be approached to nominate a representative.

Action 1: Secretariat to seek a representative from the NCA

3.9 The Chair also agreed to review the involvement of practitioners in the DFSG.

Action 2: The Chair to review the involvement of practitioners in the DFSG

4.0: DFSG work plan

4.1 The FSR was still hoping to host a general conference in March and needed to finalise the date very soon. The FSR was considering including a parallel session on digital forensics. Another option was to run pre-assessment sessions over two days.

4.2 There will be an International Communications and Digital Forensics conference around the same time in 2015, so the FSR will also consider running her conference with this, including a parallel session on digital forensics.

4.3 Other options included looking at using an afternoon as a workshop for addressing competence and involve the College of Policing. John Beckwith agreed to investigate how the Expert Network Group could support the conference.

Action 3: John Beckwith to investigate how the Expert Network Group could support the FSR's conference

4.4 Current work involved validation feedback, and the Cell Site appendix had been redrafted in line with DFSG comments. It was suggested that there should be more detail in the Cell Site document to explain CSPs. The DFSG were asked to inform Simon of any further suggestions for changes.

Action 4: DFSG members to send any further comments on the Cell Site appendix to Simon

4.5 The audio appendix draft was expected to be ready in January.

4.6 There was discussion whether specific guidance on validation of hard drives should be developed. A definition had been developed. This included accessing the physical device, acquisition of data and interpretation of the data. The first step was how to image a hard drive, the recovery of indecent

images from a hard drive under SFR, and reporting the number of images. Standards, as a first step, should then look at the competence and expertise and the manner in which the data was reported.

5.0: Digital validation guidance feedback

5.1 There were some common themes from the feedback, especially around whether ISO17025 was the appropriate standard. There were suggestions that the ISO 27 series of standards should be the appropriate measure. The ISO 27 series were guidance documents and therefore not suitable for accreditation, and could not be used as alternative standard to ISO17025. It was agreed that a clear statement was needed from the FSR in her newsletter, reiterating and framing ISO17025 as the appropriate quality standards across forensic science, and that accreditation provided the assurance about the quality of the science.

Action 5: The FSR to include in the next newsletter a statement confirming that ISO17025 was the appropriate standard

5.2 There was discussion on how to handle perceptions in some of the feedback about whether commercial interests were driving the guidance. It was necessary to explain the range of membership of the group and how they were involved in drafting the guidance. The constructive feedback on the guidance will be taken on board. The examples used should also include video. It was suggested that the validation document should be made a bit less Cell Site-centric. The requirement for good science and validation was emphasised, as well as the need to encourage practitioners to document their processes and procedures.

5.3 The next steps involved redrafting the document in line with the feedback, and circulating it to the DFSG for comment by the end of January 2015, with the deadline for comments from the DFSG at the end of February. It would be useful if comments from the DFSG included further examples.

Action 6: Simon Iveson and Matt Tart to redraft the digital validation guidance and circulate to the DFSG for comment.

Action 7: The DFSG to comment on the redrafted digital validation guidance during February

6.0: Cell Site Analysis

6.1 The Cell Site analysis appendix had been reworked in line with DFSG comments. It was suggested that the document would benefit from more information on the circumstances in which Call Data Records (CDR) were given to the analyst and the cut off point for the CDR. There was some concern that cell site analysts/practitioners needed to understand the law and procedures by which Call Data Records were obtained, especially because they will either want to influence what is sought, or may be asked to advise on what should be sought. Peter Sommer agreed to provide some additional text for the document.

Action 8: Peter Sommer to provide additional comments to the Cell Site appendix¹

6.2 The next steps were for the document to be reviewed by Matt Tart's subgroup. The subgroup will meet in February or March and report back to the DFSG in April. Simon agreed to circulate the document for technical review before then.

Action 9: Simon to circulate the Cell Site appendix for technical review

6.3 The DFSG were asked to note that ISO17025 may be up for review. Simon agreed to investigate this with Kath Monnery.

Action 10: Simon to investigate if ISO17025 was going to be reviewed.

7.0: ENFSI collaborative exercise

7.1 There was a proposal to generate EU funding around validation and the budget was around 1.5m Euros. It was necessary for the DFSG to work with ENFSI (European Network of Forensic Science Institutes) to ensure there was no duplication of activity. Digital crime and cybercrime were borderless so it was important to start thinking continent-wide in terms of standards. The Chair agreed to investigate whether he could share the ENSFI document with the DFSG.

Action 11: The Chair to investigate whether he could share the ENFSI collaborative exercise document

8.0: AOB

8.1 The DFSG were informed that Jim Luck was leading on quality for the Metropolitan Police, and it was agreed that he should join the DFSG.

8.2 There was a brief discussion on how to deal with open source and communications data, and whether it was a digital forensics activity. It was clarified that the work could be classified as the recovery/collection of digital evidence. Nigel Jones reported that he was developing a good practice guide for a section on internet evidence for Canterbury Christchurch University. CAST were also looking at an independent review of work they had done on open source. Neil Cohen agreed to send the draft requirements to Nigel Jones.

9.0: Date of next meeting

9.1 TBA in April 2015

¹ Peter Sommer's additional comments were provided and circulated to DFSG

Annex A

Present:

Mark Stokes	Met Police (Chair)
John Beckwith	Staffordshire Police
Neil Cohen	Centre for Applied Science and Technology
Dave Compton	UKAS
Nigel Jones	Technology Risk
Chris Simpson	College of Policing
Peter Sommer	LSE
Gill Tully	Forensic Science Regulator
Kenny Chigbo	Home Office (Secretary)

In attendance

Simon Iveson	Forensic Science Regulation Unit
Jim Luck	Met Police

Apologies

Ian Elkins	CPS
Peter French	Peter French and Associates
Brian Jenkinson	First Forensic Forum (F3)
Andy Letherby	HMRC
Angus Marshall	Chartered Society of Forensic Sciences
Miranda Moore	5pb Chambers
Zoe Scott	Skills for Justice
Matt Tart	CCL Forensics
Craig Wilson	Digital Detective

