

**Metadata file for:**

**Understanding the Use of Digital Forensics in Policing in England and Wales: An  
Ethnographic Analysis of Current Practices and Professional Dynamics (ES/R00742X/1)**

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## CONSENT FORM

### Title of research project

# **Understanding the Use of Digital Forensics in Policing in England and Wales: An Ethnographic Analysis of Current Practices and Professional Dynamics (ESRC Grant Ref: ES/R00742X/1)**

### Details of the project

This project will focus on the ways in which digital forensics is carried out and used in a number of police forces in England and Wales. We will be interviewing various professionals and observing events at different sites. The results will be shared with the stakeholders as well as will be written up in reports and academic publications.

### Contact Details

For further information please contact:

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Dana Wilson-Kovacs (Principal Investigator)

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[M.D.Wilson-Kovacs@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:M.D.Wilson-Kovacs@exeter.ac.uk)

If you have concerns/questions about the research that you would like to discuss with someone else at the University, please contact:

Professor Susan Kelly, Director of Research

Department of Sociology, Philosophy, and Anthropology

01392 725139

[s.e.kelly@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:s.e.kelly@exeter.ac.uk)

### Consent

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project. I understand that:

- my participation is voluntary and I may choose to withdraw at any time;
- my decision to participate or not participate will not affect my current or future relationship with the University of Exeter or my organisation
- any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications, academic conferences and seminar presentations;
- the information, which I give, may be shared in an anonymised form;
- all information I give will be treated as confidential; and
- the researchers will make every effort to preserve my anonymity and will only supply my name in publications if I have indicated that this is my preference (please see section below the area provided for initial signatures). I understand that I can change my mind about whether or not I wish to have my name disclosed at any point prior to publication.

.....  
(Signature of participant)

.....  
(Date)

.....  
(Printed name of participant)

.....  
(Printed name of researcher)

.....  
(Signature of researcher)

**To be completed after the interview, only if desired by the participant:**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give permission to be identified and have my contributions attributed to me.

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of researcher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher(s).

Your contact details are kept separately from your interview data.

**Data Protection Notice**

The information you provide will be used for research purposes and your personal data will be processed in accordance with current data protection legislation and the University's notification lodged at the Information Commissioner's Office. Your personal data will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties.

The current research is funded by the Economic Social Research Council (ESRC).

**Understanding the Use of Digital Forensics in Policing in England and Wales: An Ethnographic Analysis of Current Practices and Professional Dynamics (ESRC Grant Ref: ES/R00742X/1)**

Information Sheet for Participants (V1)

**Details of the project**

You are being invited to take part in a research study that is focusing on the ways in which digital forensics is carried out and used in a number of different police forces within England and Wales. We will be interviewing various professionals and observing events at different sites. The results will be shared with the stakeholders as well as will be written up in reports and academic publications.

Before you decide whether to take part, it is important for you to understand the purpose of the project and what participation will entail. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Do discuss your potential participation with others if you wish and please do ask any questions that may arise after reading this information sheet. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

**Who will conduct the research?**

Dr Dana Wilson-Kovacs is the Principal Investigator and Dr Hannah Wheat is the Research Fellow working on the project. They will be collecting , managing and analysing the data and will be responsible for disseminating the findings. Dr Sabina Leonelli and Professor Brian Rappert are also part of the research team and will be involved in the analysis and dissemination of the findings.

**What is the purpose of the research?**

The purpose of the research is to provide an in-depth understanding of how digital forensics is currently used in the police force. Attention will be given to current procedures and practices, external and internal influences, the various professional roles involved in digital forensics and stakeholders' perspectives on the current and future role of digital forensics within policing. We intend to provide evidence-based insights that could potentially inform future policy, training initiatives and everyday practice.

**Why have I been chosen?**

You have been selected as a potential participant because of your involvement in digital forensics and/or because of the impact that digital forensics has on your work.

**What would I be asked to do if I took part?**

You will be interviewed by either Dr Wilson-Kovacs or Dr Wheat and you may be part of observed activities that one of the researchers will make field notes on.

**What will happen to my personal information?**

In order to undertake the research project, we will need to collect the following personal information/data about you:

- Name
- Professional role

- Contact details (address, email, telephone number) in case we need to get in touch with you and so that we can share our findings with you.
- An audio-recording of your interview, recorded via a digital recorder. These audio recordings will be transcribed. As they are transcribed, they will be immediately anonymised.
- Field notes of your actions while you work on a digital forensic related task (if relevant)
- The audio recordings and fieldnotes will only be used for the purposes of this study. Only the lead researchers will have access to your un-anonymised data. The other members of the research team (Dr Leonelli and Professor Rappert) will have access to your anonymised data (transcripts and field-notes), as they will be involved in the analysis and dissemination phase of the study. The raw un-anonymised data (recordings and un-anonymised fieldnotes) will be stored for 5 years once the project has completed on a password protected, encrypted computer in the Principal Investigator's University office. Once this period of time has elapsed, the data will be deleted. Anonymised data will be kept indefinitely and securely by the Principal Investigator on an encrypted, password protected University computer.

The information (data) we collect from you will be used and stored in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018 which legislate to protect your personal information. The University of Exeter processes personal data for the purposes of carrying out research in the public interest. The University of Exeter, as Data Controller for this project, will be responsible for the protection of the personal information that is collected from you for the purposes of this study. To ensure that researchers comply with the legal obligations surrounding the protection of personal data the University of Exeter has safeguards in place and has published their policies and procedures on data protection. For more information, please review the University of Exeter's GDPR website at: <https://www.exeter.ac.uk/gdpr/>

The University of Exeter advocates transparency concerning its use of personal data. This information sheet should have provided a clear explanation of how your personal data will be used and stored. If you do have any queries about the University's processing of your personal data that cannot be resolved by the research team, further information may be obtained from the University's Data Protection Officer by emailing [ssis-ethics@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:ssis-ethics@exeter.ac.uk)

### **What happens if I change my mind?**

If you decide to participate and sign the consent form, you can still choose to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to yourself. If you withdraw after being interviewed and/or observed and our analysis has not yet taken place, we will delete all of your data. It will not be possible to remove your data from the project once it has been analysed. However, no identifying details will be attached to your data and your data protection rights will not be affected.

All interviews (and possibly some observations) will be audio recorded. The recordings are a necessary part of your participation, as they will generate the transcripts of the interviews that we will analyse. However, you should always feel comfortable with the recording process and you have the choice to stop the recording at any time.

**How will my information be kept confidential?**

Your data will be stored secured on the University's encrypted and password protected network drive and backed up on an encrypted password protected external hard drive stored on University premises.

**Will my data be used for future research?**

Your data will only be used for the purposes of this study. If we would like to use your data for a different study, we would have to get permission from you first.

**Who has reviewed the research project?**

The project has been reviewed by the University of Exeter Research Ethics Committee and by the Economic Social Research Council (ESRC) who funded the study.

**Contact Details**

For further information please contact:

Dr Hannah Wheat (Research Fellow)

University of Exeter, Byrne House, St German's Rd, Exeter EX4 4PJ

01392 72 5136

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Methodology	Details and participants
Ethnographic observations	270 hours observations at 4 forces with technicians, mobile device examiners and computer investigators, team, regional and senior managers, SIOs, OICs, detectives and other police personnel.
67 Interviews	<p>At the 4 forces observed with technicians, mobile examiners, computer investigators, team managers, senior and regional managers, performance officers, intelligence analysts, police officers, digital media investigators, detective chief inspectors</p> <p>Other interviews were carried out with professionals and practitioners from the Home Office, the Forensic Science Regulator Office, the College of Policing, private forensic science support providers, as well as expert witnesses, prosecutors and defence lawyers</p>
Document analysis	Internal documents, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Service Level Agreements (SLAs)

### Questions for SIOs

1. When does digital forensics (DF) become relevant to your team's investigations?
2. How does digital evidence in a case that your teams are working is managed? Describe step by step, with examples.
3. How does DF evidence contribute to your team's investigations?
4. What decisions do you have to make regarding DF? How are they captured and who reviews them?
5. What limits are imposed on your team's use of DF evidence?
6. Do you have to prioritise certain cases over others in terms of DF input? How/what type of cases get prioritised? Please use examples.
7. How much do the officers within your team understand DF?
8. How do other individuals/teams/organisations that your teams work with use DF evidence? At what stage of the investigation do they become involved?
9. How much communication is with the digital forensic unit (DFU) during an investigation (from start to finish)?
10. What type of output do your teams receive from the DFU after they have finished with their examinations of your exhibits? How does this compare with outsourced work? What are the gaps in understanding?
11. What impedes your team's use of DF within an investigation?
12. What facilitates your team's use of DF within an investigation?
13. Please discuss a case your team has worked on where DF contributed significantly to its success
14. Please discuss a case you team has worked on where, in hindsight, the DF aspect of the case could have been handled better
15. How do you think DF should be best deployed to help combat volume crime?
16. Whose role is it to interpret DF data, an officer or a DF practitioner?
17. What is your force doing well in terms of DF?



**Questions for the digital forensic practitioners (technicians, mobile examiners, computer examiners, forensic managers)**

1. What is your role and what does it involve? How did you come into it?
2. How long have you been working here? In the police and/or DF as a whole?
3. What attracted you to this line of work? How do you identify yourself, professionally?

**Activities**

4. What do you like about your job?
5. Is your remit in an investigation clear?
6. Do you find yourself doing more than your role stipulates? If so, how often?
7. What are the challenges you experience in carrying out your work?
8. What other pressures do you experience – externally and internally?

**Investigative Strategies**

9. Is there clarity about what the investigating officer is trying to achieve?
10. How much time do you spend liaising with officers about their cases?
11. To what extent is the job you are doing investigative?
12. How do you know what to look for and what forensics techniques/packages to apply?
13. Does your analytic approach differ between offences?

**Recognition**

14. How do you know about the outcome of a case?
15. How much of your work is recognised internally and at force level if a case you have been working on is successful?

**Accreditation**

16. How useful is accreditation?
17. What have been the challenges?
18. How well do you think accreditation has been understood by the forces in the Collaboration?
19. Are there any downsides to accreditation – how can they be navigated/overcome?

**Risk**

20. How do you know how to deal with risk?
21. Does it appear at multiple levels?
22. Who owns the risk?
23. Whose remit is to deal with the risk?

**Health and Wellbeing**

24. What are the challenges you experience in your work?
25. How similar or dis/similar you feel they are compared to those experienced by your colleagues?
26. How supported you feel in your role?
27. How often do you use the support provided?
28. How effective do you feel the support is?
29. What would improve this support?

### **Topic Questions for Digital Media Examiners, Cyber Crime Advisors and Police Officers**

1. What do you do? What does the role involve? How did you come into it? How long have you been doing it?
2. What is your remit in an investigation?
3. How do your skills complement those of DF examiners/CA/DMIs/police officers?
4. How do you establish an investigative strategy?
5. How often is this disputed or altered when submitted to the DFU? Examples.
6. How do you know which items to forward to the DFU?
7. (if pertinent) Can you talk us through what steps a DMI/CA would take, who they interact with, when they are involved in the investigation and how are they brought into a case?
8. What are the challenges you encounter?
9. What makes a good DMI/CA/police officer?
10. Would you like your role to develop in future? How?
11. What is the training you receive?
12. How are you dealing with the issue of disclosure?
13. Do you think there should be shifting lines of involvement and responsibility between the DFUs and the DMIs/CAs/Police Officers?

interview or	Organisation	professional role
1	Force 1	computer examiner
2	Force 2	computer examiner
3	Force 3	technician
4	Force 3	mobile examiner
5	Force 4	computer examiner
6	Force 1	computer examiner/team leader
7	Force 2	mobile examiner
8	Force 2	computer examiner/team leader
9	Force 4	computer examiner/team leader
10	Force 1	computer examiner
11	Force 1	police officer
12	Force 4	police officer
13	Force 4	computer examiner
14	Force 4	mobile examiner
15	Forensic Science Regulator Office	forensic science regulator office
16	Force 3	computer examiner/team leader
17	Force 3	computer examiner
18	Forces 1-4	forensic manager
19	Force 3	mobile phone examiner
20	<u>Forces 1-4</u>	performance officer
21	Force 2	technician
22	Force 1	technician
23	Force 2	computer examiner
24	Force 2	mobile examiners x 2
25	Force 3	computer examiners x 3
26	Forces 1-4	Senior forensic manager and performer
27	Force 4	technician
28	Force 2	performance analyst
29	Force 3	mobile team x 3
30	Force 1	detective superintendent
31	Force 2	public protection officers x 2
32	private practice	practitioner and academic
33	Force 3	detective chief inspector/regional
34	Force 1	detective chief inspector/major crime i
35	private practice	defence lawyer
36	CPS	prosecutor
37	Force 2	detective chief inspector
37	Force 4	detective chief inspector
40	Force 1	detective chief inspector
41	private practice	retired practitioner and expert witness
42	private practice	practitioner
43	Force 1	detective superintendent
44	Force 2	detective chief inspector SOCB
45	Force 2	Digital Media Investigator (DMI)
46	Force 2	Digital Media Investigator (DMI)
47	Force 2	Digital Media Investigator (DMI)
48	Force 3	Digital Media Investigator (DMI)

49	Force 4	Digital Media Investigator (DMI)	
50	Force 4	Digital Media Investigator (DMI)	
51	Force 1	procurement services	
52	Force 1	Digital Media Investigator (DMI)	
53	Force 2	intelligence analyst	
54	private forensic science provider	senior manager, fire investigation and c	
55	private forensic science provider	mobile device examiner	
56	private forensic science provider	mobile device examiner	
57	private forensic science provider	computer examiner	
58	private forensic science provider	computer examiner	
59	private forensic science provider	apprentice mobile device examiner	
60	Force 3	Cyber Advisor	
61	Home Office	DSTL personnel	
62	Home Office	DSTL personnel	
63	Police Foundation	researcher	
64	Collegel of Policing	trainer	
65	College of Policing	trainer	
66	private practice	defence lawyer	
67	CPS	prosecutor	

**Observations at police forces, digital forensic units (DFUs) and private forensic science support provider**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Dates</b>
<b>F1/DFU1</b>	28 January – 15 March 2019 2 September – 20 September 2019
<b>F2/DFU2</b>	11 February – 8 March 2019 9 September -20 September 2019
<b>F3/DFU3</b>	18 March - 22 March 2019 16 September – 27 September 2019
<b>F4/DFU4</b>	6 May -13 May 2019 4 November - 29 November 2019
<b>Independent forensic science support provider</b>	15 July – 19 July 2019