

Data Ethics Committee minutes: 2 December 2025

Notes of the Data Ethics Committee (DEC) meeting 20th November 2025 via Teams

Attendees

Presenters

Simon Wilson (Chief Officer, Kent Police)

Stephen Jennings (Detective Superintendent, Essex Police)

ecda members

Wysh Kanesalingam (*Data Partnerships Officer, ecda*)

DEC members

Katerina D Hadjimatheou (Chair)

Yani Tyskerud

Andrew Knott

Alex Fassio

Mackenzie Jorgensen

Apologies

Karthik Durgaprasad

Project overview

During this committee meeting Essex Police renewed their conversation on their Live Facial Recognition (LFR) project.

Essex Police commissioned a study by Cambridge University which identified a bias linked to a 'True Positive Identification Rate' (TPIR) in the algorithm used for the LFR technology. Essex Police were also recommended by the Home Office to commission a study with the National Physical Laboratory (NPL) for expert advice on determining the most appropriate threshold settings to minimise the identified bias.

Following analysis conducted by both institutions, they returned differing results and recommendations. Essex Police have gone back to their technology provider who have also made adjustments to reduce the rate of TPIR.

Conclusions from Committee discussion

Committee advised to continue evaluating the algorithm and deployment results at a local level.

Committee observations raised and responses provided:

- The committee queried whether the police have looked at other force deployments of LFR for guidance on their own trial, to which Essex Police clarified that due to demographic variations from county to county completely replicating other force trials may not be the most suitable. Instead the algorithm threshold is set at a level based on recommended practice.
- Essex police identified the main reason for false positives was the ingesting of poor quality images uploaded into the system. Essex Police have gone back to the technology supplier and asked for this to be corrected, since then lower pixel quality

images have been rejected by the system and the system no longer has images of this quality within it.

- The Committee asked whether police officers patrolling deployment areas had been informed and trained on the specifics of LFR technology to address any public concerns or queries during operations. Essex Police clarified that an operational command team, comprising technology experts, is based within the LFR vans. Additional resources, including QR codes and websites with FAQs, are available within local policing districts to provide further information. Officers also receive training from the project lead. Essex Police reiterated that the project is fully overt and they remain committed to transparency. For example, during deployments, LFR vans are visible in the area, and the public is encouraged to approach officers with any questions or concerns.
- Essex Police to take their findings to the National Lead in order to get some guidance on how to proceed with the differing results produced from the two studies.
- Essex Police currently working on a simple and effective way of communicating the project objectives, along with other important technical information out to the public. This may include promotional materials, e.g. videos, to inform and reassure public of what LFR is and how it works to provide clarity into what the deployment entails.

Project recommendations

- Committee advised not to ignore the results of either analysis conducted, but to look to navigate between the two. Essex Police could benefit from having conversations with NPL and Cambridge together about the results they've produced and together see if they can come to an explanation on why the results differ between the studies.
- Committee recommended that testing and deployment should take into consideration broader guidance and national recommendations, but mostly be appropriate for the community in Essex. Developing a plan for regular testing of the algorithm could help maintain threshold accuracy and keep the technology in check.
- Committee recommended to look at Algorithmic Transparency standards ([Find out how algorithmic tools are used in public organisations - GOV.UK](#)) for guidance on public consultation on project.
- Ensure all police officers within the deployment are trained with project specifics and basic knowledge on the technology used to better advise the public but also to allow room for police officers to question aspects of the project from their experience on the ground.