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Northumbria research to help shape forensic science use in criminal law

Academics from Northumbria University, Newcastle, and the University of Derby have conducted research to help inform UK policymakers on the use of digital forensics and digital evidence across the criminal justice system.

The research has been carried out with the assistance of the Home Office as part of expert contributions to an important Government project looking at the impact of forensic science in UK law.

Northumbria's Dr Cerian Griffiths, Emma Piasecki, Philp Anderson and

Professor Tim Wilson and University of Derby's Dr Sophie Carr, drew on their previous legal practice and forensic research experience to better understand how digital forensics and digital evidence are currently being used across the criminal justice system. As an interdisciplinary research team, they produced a revealing and extremely well-received report entitled: [*Digital Forensics within the Criminal Justice System: Use, Effectiveness, and Impact*](#)

The report's findings provide recommendations to inform future policymaking.

The report states: "Digital forensics is one of the fastest developing areas of criminal evidence and litigation, with 90% of criminal investigations and prosecutions now involving a digital element. Using a synthesis of interviews, focus groups, and surveys, our team at Northumbria undertook an ambitious study involving participants from across the criminal justice system – incorporating policing, digital forensics and law."

Participants in the study included officers from regional police forces, the National Crime Agency and those involved in counter-terrorism, police Digital Forensics Unit investigators, HM Prison and Probation Service, independent digital forensics practitioners, the Crown Prosecution Service, and solicitors and barristers in independent practice with experience of both prosecuting and defending.

This research project breaks new ground in facilitating collaborative and constructive cross-professional dialogue about problems and problem-solving – and involving organisations embedded in the criminal justice system from investigation to trial and appeal.

The research team presented their findings to the Home Office-led Forensic Science Reform Programme Board, and the report featured again in discussion at the Board's final meeting at the close of the Programme.

The key findings from the study will be presented at the upcoming Policing in the Digital Society Conference 2024/25: Opportunities and Challenges in Digital Policing – Theoretical and Practical Perspectives following on from a successful presentation at Policing in the Digital Society Conference 2023 in Apeldoorn, Netherlands that outlined the study's approach and methodologies.

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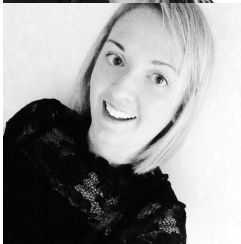


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