Cumbria Office of Police and Crime Commissioner

**Cumbria Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) response to inspections of Cumbria Constabulary published by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS)**

*Section 33 of the Police Act 1996 (as amended by section 37 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017) requires local policing bodies to respond to recommendations in inspectors reports within 56 days.*

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| **Inspection Title:**  | #25298 An inspection into how well the police and other agencies use digital forensics in their investigations |
| **Date Published:** | 01/12/2022 |
| **Type of Inspection:** | National Inspection  |
| **Key Findings**  |
| In this inspection we examined the provision of digital forensics in police forces and regional organised crime units. We considered whether they understood and could manage their demand, and whether victims of crime were receiving a quality service. Digital forensics is a branch of forensic science, which includes the recovery and examination of digital devices. Today most, if not all, crimes have some form of digital footprint. We found that the demand for digital forensic examinations was increasing year on year, and in some cases outstripped the capacity of forces to respond effectively. We make nine recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of digital forensic services.  |
| **Recommendations:**  |
| 1. #25351 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.
2. #25398 By September 2023, the National Police Chief’s Council and all forces within England and Wales need to include the management of digital forensic kiosks in their governance and oversight frameworks.
3. #25451 By November 2024, chief constables should integrate digital forensic services under their existing forensic science structure.
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| **PCC & Chief Constable Response to Report and Recommendation:** |
| The Police and Crime Commissioner welcomes HMICFRS’s report on how well the police and other agencies use digital forensics in their investigations.It is a priority within the Police and Crime Plan to continue to work with the Police to develop the Police Cyber and Digital Crime Unit, as well as to improve how the Police deal with victims of crime. We know that gaining evidence from digital devices has become a key part of many police investigations. However, keeping pace with developing technology and the number of devices which need investigation is challenging. It is important that we work to ensure that the time which victims are without their devices is minimised and that the analysis of digital devices does not slow down an investigation. One example is where the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner has been working with the Constabulary as it continues to improve the processes for Rape and Serious Sexual Assault investigations. This includes reviewing the analysis of victim and offender’s digital devices, including the timescales and appropriateness of the decision to take them in for analysis.Through his Public Accountability Conferences, the Commissioner will seek assurance from the Chief Constable that the Police Force has considered the recommendations and reviewed its governance structure for digital forensic services. He will also seek assurance that the Constabulary is working to manage current and future demand for digital forensic examinations, to support investigations and minimise the impact on victims of their devices being taken for examination. |