

## **ADVICE RELATING TO ETHICS COMMITTEE BRIEFING NOTES**

### **Predicting Violence**

23. The purpose of this project is to deliver direct support to Project Guardian, the purpose of which is to reduce serious violence, focusing on young people in public spaces. In particular it will seek to develop a statistical model to predict the likely number and most likely locations of violent crimes committed over a four week period. Of note this it is of a similar nature to, and is intended to complement the Knife Crime project that was submitted to the ethics committee earlier this year.

24. As part of this process analysts will provide forecasts over a 4 weekly period to enable planning to take place for resource allocation and law enforcement activity. However, this analysis will not focus on targeting specific individuals, but will include identifying hotspots for prevention and enforcement operations.

### **Analysis**

25. The information that will be analysed will relate to serious violent crime as well as data concerning offenders and victims. This will be aggregated so that no individual may be identified, but will produce bespoke geographic areas aligned to the hotspots detailed above.

26. The project will also include evaluation of accuracy thus ensuring quality control in delivering this predictive model. In addition the data that will be used is already held by WMP having been recovered during the course of routine investigative work by the Force.

27. In order for this project to progress it is necessary to demonstrate that in order to make use of any information recovered or used it must be strictly necessary and for judicial and statutory purposes, namely for reasons of substantial public interest.

28. In considering this point it is worthy of note that there has been a marked increase in violent crime in the West Midlands region over the past year, namely some 32%. In addition the Home Office has provided significant funding and a mandate for WMP to reduce serious violence in public spaces, with a focus on reducing knife crimes among young people. Further, this project will directly support the delivery of the government's Serious Violence Strategy, which puts greater focus on steering young people away from a life of crime. As such the project would meet the criteria of being in a substantial public interest.

29. As for the issue of being strictly necessary, (namely relating to a pressing social need, and one cannot reasonably achieve it through less intrusive means) the briefing note has identified the pressing social need contained within the intent and purpose of the project. This is to predict the locations of violent crime amongst young people in order to deliver enforcement or preventative operations.

30. In considering the issue of using a less intrusive means, as with the county lines project discussed above WMP already holds the material to be relied upon. If the project sought to use other resources and obtain the necessary material from elsewhere it could be assessed as being more intrusive, noting that the required information will already have been recovered by WMP during the course of routine operations and activities.

31. Aside from the issues discussed above the other matters which need to be addressed with regard to this project relate to the issues of proportionality, notably four questions that should be considered and answered relating to this project.

*Is the legislative objective sufficiently important to justify limiting a fundamental right?*

32. Whilst an individual has a right to a private life, that privacy may be interfered with in accordance with the law. WMP is able to process personal data and relying on authority provided by legislation to do

so. The purpose of the activity within the project is law enforcement, which taking account of the threat to the public by an increase in serious crime including an 82% increase in knife crime over the past 8 years may be so important as to limit the right to a private life.

*Are the measures which have been designed to meet it rationally connected to it?*

33. Legislation is in place, which provides a means whereby personal data may be processed and is also subject to strict controls. In addition the processing of personal data to reduce violent crime amongst the young is for law enforcement purposes.

*Are they no more than are necessary to accomplish it?*

34. The measures have been considered within the “strictly necessary” test in addition to the fact that there is a pressing social need to reduce serious violence in public spaces. The use of data as part of this project will directly support law enforcement operations focusing on this significant challenge.

*Do they strike a fair balance between the rights of the individual and the interests of the community?*

35. Although everyone has a right to a private life that right is not absolute. It may be interfered in accordance with the law for a number of reasons including for the prevention of disorder or crime.

36. The rights of any individual related to this project do not take precedence over those of other members of the public. A balancing exercise must take place taking account of several competing interests. In considering an individual’s right to privacy, against reducing serious crime, in particular focusing on young people, whose lives may be blighted by this criminality the ethics committee may agree with an assessment that a fair balance would be struck when undertaking this project.

### **Conclusion**

37. The purpose of the predicting violence project is to make use of lawfully retained material in order to conduct law enforcement operations and predictive activities to address serious violence and criminality. When assessing the rights of the individual in the context of the purpose of the project as well as taking account of necessity, proportionality and the balancing act to be applied, it is my assessment that WMP would be justified in conducting the proposed analysis.

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