**Ethics Panel Recommendations**

*05/03/2025*

**Indecent Images:**

The Panel suggest that there is a need to separate the issues of uploading images to the database and criminalising young people. For instance, they suggest the wiping of phones is unnecessary and doesn’t comply with the sensitive treatment young people should be afforded. Along these lines, one member suggests that avoiding a binary response is essential in delivering this sensitivity, suggesting a tailored response is a must.

One member suggests that the sensitive approach should involve the parents and help impose the seriousness of the issue upon the child. Another member raises concerns about how this would be handled with older teenagers and whether their permission would be necessary to involve parents.

Multiple members suggest, however, that there is a distinct need to mandate and continue uploading images to the database. It is suggested that the adverse effects of not uploading the images outweigh the complications of utilising the database and that there are ethical, legal and operational concerns of not uploading.

One member explains it would be useful to know how often images on the database resurface in other cases before suggesting that issues of AI and AI generated images may escalate the problem and make the database more essential than at present.

A final concern raised by a member suggested there could be an issue that uploading the image onto a database could prolong trauma due to the image existing there indefinitely into later life. An alternative practice raised was that the images be deleted after a certain length of time having not been flagged in another case.

**Recommendations:**

* The Panel recommend that uploading every image to the database should be mandated and not left to individual officer’s discretion.
* The Panel further raise that the experience of the child involved should be a sensitive, tailored approach that does not seek to criminalise them.
* A final recommendation suggests that a piece of work should be commissioned to consider and investigate the entire process which can then be used to inform and dictate practice and the discussion. It is added that this should be a national discussion due to the prevalence of the issue and lack of national policy.

**No formal recommendation made**

**Match and Merge:**

The Panel agree that whichever approach produces the most accuracy should be prioritised as accuracy is the most important aspect. They suggest the implications of over or under matching could be serious and as such, time pressures cannot allow standards and the review process to slip.

The Panel suggest the risk will always exist no matter what action is taken and that there is no perfect solution to the issue. One member, for example, raises the issue that offenders will commonly lie abut their details and no difference in approach will solve this.

Overall however, the Panel approves of the approach of WMP as it stands up to scrutiny and is defensible, limiting the extend of ethical concerns with the project.

One member suggested best practice would be to hope to introduce further variables into the process to make profiles more distinct from one another. The inclusions of IDs would be very beneficial although perhaps, difficult. They continue by suggesting best practice elsewhere included using the Levenshtein algorithm for matching names whilst only accommodating exact matches for date of birth.

**Recommendations:**

* The majority of the Panel recommends that under matching is a more serious issue than overmatching due to the seriousness and danger of some offences/offenders.
* The Panel suggests that an option to be able to link certain records but not formally merge them should be made available and that officers are to be made aware of which records are the result of a merge or have potential matches.
* The Panel agrees that the current approach stands up to scrutiny and is defensible.

**Outcome B – Proceed with minor amendments**

**Optimal Patrols:**

One member suggested there was concern that hotspots may be misinterpreted as a predictive policing tool and suggested there was consequently, a need to clarify what they are.

Multiple members expressed a desire to see the community angle increased dramatically with members and leaders becoming more involved in the process. They suggested this could be hugely beneficial to both police and the community.

Overall the Panel suggested it was the right thing to do, ethically, to identify and target crime hotspots so long as the data is sound and supports their actions. In order to best do this, however, members suggested there should be greater communication and the introduction of a thorough evaluation process.

**Recommendations:**

* The Panel expressed a desire for a greater community aspect and communication surrounding the identification and deployment of resources to hotspots.
* The Panel request that there should be a more formalised evaluation process introduced to ensure the efficiency and ethical validity of hotspot policing.

**Outcome B – Proceed with minor amendments**