

Digital Advisory Network

A single point of contact for non-urgent digital advice for police officers and staff, which seeks to resolve all digital investigative enquiries through a network of subject matter experts.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Organisational
Topic	Digital, data and analytics Investigation Training and professional development
Organisation	Durham Constabulary
HMICFRS inspection 2023–25	HMICFRS. 2023. PEEL 2023–25: Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy. An inspection of Durham Constabulary.
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Region	North East
Partners	Police
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.

Key details

Start date	October 2021
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Workforce

Aim

To enable all members of staff within the organisation to access bespoke digital advice for their investigations.

Intended outcome

To provide a consistent response to digital enquiries throughout the force on a non-urgent basis.

Description

Digital Advisory Network (DAN) is primarily staffed by digital media investigators and digital forensic unit investigators, who link in with subject matter experts in the central authorities bureau, technical services, regional organised crime unit and wider cyber and digital networks. The inbox is monitored during office hours.

The queries are reviewed, the relevant subject matter expert is contacted and timely, specific advice is given back to the requesting officer to enable them to progress their investigation.

The inbox is primarily monitored by the force's dedicated digital media investigation cadre, digital forensic unit staff and online child abuse intelligence and victim ID functions. It is controlled by the digital investigation unit's detective sergeants and detective inspector to ensure that all queries are responded to in a timely fashion with relevant advice from subject matter experts across the force's digital network.

Subject matter experts are used through the force's central authorities bureau, CCTV technical function, ICT function, wider forensic command, the regional organised crime unit, and where

appropriate partners in Team Cyber UK, Business Resilience Centre, and so forth.

Setting up DAN was at no cost to the force.

Overall impact

Positive feedback has been received in several of the cases where DAN has been used.

In the last quarter, the network has provided advice on cases from digital stalking, stolen phones, hacking, hoax calls, remote CCTV access, use of the Child Abuse Image Database (CAID), router examination, vehicle telematics, device attribution, access logs on devices, mobile phone examination and interpretation of media, evidential capture of screenshots and GPS offender tracking.

Learning

DAN was set up prior to the force having a dedicated digital media investigation function. Digital media investigators (DMIs) provide bespoke digital investigative advice to the entire force.

The DMIs are now well known in the force and sit in the morning locality management meetings, giving supervisors a direct point of contact for daily policing business. This has helped reinforce the use of DAN and the openness of the force's digital network to support the front line.

The biggest challenge was raising awareness of the service. A1 posters were placed in all the force's stations, communications regarding the launch were shared on the force intranet, news bulletin and investigation system. The chief constable also released a vlog to raise awareness and endorse the DAN service.

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Tags

Digital intelligence and investigation