Kulpa police platform (KPP) to verify and authenticate digital forensic evidence

A platform and app to encourage the public to share digital forensic evidence to support the investigation of cases.

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Key details

Does it work?	Untested – new or innovative
Focus	Prevention
Topic	Digital Intelligence and investigation Operational policing
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Region	Eastern
Partners	Police
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.
Start date	September 2024
Scale of initiative	Local

Key details

Target group	Workforce

Aim

The aims of the Kulpa police platform (KPP) are to:

- provide usable and verified digital forensic evidence for investigations
- enable victims and witnesses to share digital evidence with the police
- ensure investigations are more effective, time efficient, and cost effective for Hertfordshire Constabulary

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of KPP are to:

- reduce the number of cases with evidential difficulties
- improve the early engagement process with the suspect by obtaining verified digital forensic evidence at the start of the public contact process
- reduce the need to download content from mobile devices
- reduce investigation times and the time between report and outcomes
- increase the referral rate to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)
- reduce the rate of victim attrition
- improve the number of cases with positive outcomes
- improve public trust and confidence

Description

In Hertfordshire Constabulary, low positive outcome rates and high levels of victim attrition have prevented greater levels of justice.

To resolve this issue, Hertfordshire Constabulary purchased a software as a service (SaaS) licence (grants subscription-based, for recurring access to cloud-hosted software) for the Kulpa police platform (KPP). The pricing structure for this platform is a single fixed annual licence fee, with the

option of a one, three or five-year contract. The annual licence fee includes full technical support and 'on-demand' training packages for officers and staff. Hertfordshire Constabulary purchased a 1-year licence fee for £52,504.46. There was no tender process required, and it was straightforward for the force to provide a business case.

The license provides access to the certified KPP and Kulpa app, which enables data to be captured and uploaded to the platform. The use of Kulpa is supported by the Crown Prosecution Service at both a national and local level. It is also supported and endorsed by a number of victim support services.

The change delivery team have been given overall responsibility for the project. Hertfordshire Constabulary's force control room (FCR) are overseeing the monitoring of the KPP.

Training

The app and platform have been built to ensure that no training is required for users wishing to upload information. The actions required to store and share evidence will be natural for anyone with a smart phone.

Kulpa provides face-to-face training to officers to use the KPP. This is to engage officers by showing them how to use it within investigations.

The Kulpa app and KPP

KPP enables users to upload evidence to a secure cloud (the Kulpa cloud).

The Kulpa app is free and available for anyone to download from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store. Alternatively, it can be accessed on a computer, through any web browser.

Users can upload any size of the following file types:

- photos
- videos
- audio files
- text messages
- social media screenshots
- WhatsApp exports

- CCTV
- doorbell footage
- documents

Storing evidence on Kulpa is safe, secure, and it can be used in any legal process. When uploading information, each file is provided with metadata (time, date and location information) which enables the file to become verified digital forensic evidence.

Users may need to store evidence for several reasons. For some, they may need to use the app in a civil legal process, whilst others may want to seek prosecution through the criminal courts.

Once uploaded to the Kulpa app, evidence is stored on the KPP. Following this, users can share it with anyone they choose. Kulpa aims to help users with receiving the right support and response to achieve a positive outcome. Kulpa provides users with the in-app option to share their evidence to a 'Kulpa accredited lawyer' for civil legal assistance or 'share it with the police' for a criminal investigation.

The KPP enables officers and staff to quickly review evidence that has been shared. It also allows them to download the evidence file in a format which is fully compliant with the criminal procedure rules, complete with a signed MG11 statement (a formal statement used to record an incident or a person's experience of a crime).

The KPP can save the investigating officer several hours on the most basic of cases. Kulpa's use also saves the force money by reducing the digital forensic services (DFU) demand. This reduces excess data storage costs and the number of resources required to properly investigate a crime as well as achieve an outcome.

Because of the demand from users to share their evidence with the police, Kulpa has developed an add-on to the platform for police forces to subscribe to that optimises the data sharing process.

Roll out

Kulpa was first introduced internally within the Welwyn and Hatfield domestic abuse investigation safeguarding unit (DAISU). The unit promoted the use of Kulpa to victims and witnesses by advocating it as a means to quickly obtain digital forensic evidence.

There was then a one-hour session to introduce it to the:

- neighbourhood policing team
- intervention team
- local crime team
- fraud team
- case investigation unit

The platform was then promoted by the force's victim service unit, who added a QR code for Kulpa to all support letters sent to victims. Thereafter, the support services commissioned by the police crime commissioner (PCC) office were briefed and asked to promote use of the app.

Further publicity is to follow to maximise its benefits.

Evaluation

Hertfordshire Constabulary is leading an ongoing evaluation, looking at:

- feedback from officers
- comparing statistics from cases that used Kulpa and those that did not

The evaluation is measuring:

- the number of cases submitted to Kulpa
- the positive outcome rate of domestic abuse and stalking offences when using Kulpa compared to force average
- the positive outcome rate when using Kulpa compared to force averages
- amount of time officers are saving when using Kulpa compared with non-Kulpa cases
- whether there is a reduction in case investigation compared to cases not using Kulpa

Hertfordshire Constabulary will use surveys and feedback forms to assess public confidence rates. The data will then be analysed to compare this between Kulpa and non-Kulpa cases.

Overall impact

- To date, hundreds of victims have shared thousands of digital evidence files. Long-term victims of domestic abuse have been empowered to share evidence with Kulpa. Victims of violence against

women and girls (VAWG) are using Kulpa, who previously were less likely to engage with the force.

- Using Kulpa means fewer phone downloads, this not only saves the additional time required to download the phone, but also the examination of the download to find and exhibit the material that is evidence.
- Initial anecdotal evidence supports that investigation times are reduced by being able to put substantive evidence to suspects at first interview.
- Early evidence suggests savings in terms of police officer time and in other costs, for example data storage.

Early findings

- Initial data has shown an improvement in the number of positive outcomes. 33% (small sample of initial data) of cases which have used Kulpa have resulted in positive outcomes, in comparison to the force average of 12.58%.
- There has been a reduction in the number of repeat victims. When the app is repeatedly used, victims can provide authenticated, immediately usable evidence for each incident. This has enabled the force to reach thresholds required for prosecution, for example, patterns in stalking and harassment cases. For 'repeat users' the force has been able to resolve their cases and successfully safeguard them.

Learning

- It was straightforward to purchase a KPP SaaS licence. Bedfordshire Police, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Constabularies have completed a data protection impact assessment (DPIA) and full cloud security assessment (CSA) with Kulpa. As a SaaS platform, Kulpa does not require any integrations or IT infrastructure changes. The only requirement is that IT whitelist web addresses to ensure officers can access the platform from their force devices.
- It is essential that the KPP is monitored by the department who monitors the force's submissions from single-online home (SOH), for example, the force control room. Whilst Kulpa gives advice to users in relation to the use of emergency numbers, the system should be monitored 24/7 (or close to) by a member of staff who is able to allocate resources to be dispatched if required.
- Kulpa has a full package of written and recorded on-demand training sessions which can be delivered quickly and easily to the entire force. Kulpa also provide 'in person' training over Teams and provide a constant communication channel for officers to ask questions, raise issues or

provide suggestions and feedback.

- To see the greatest benefit, it is important that the entire force, support services, and public are encouraged to use the app and platform.

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