Science & Technology in Policing

POLICE STAR FUND 24/25

A GENERATIVE AI PLATFORM FOR POLICING

Summary

We propose to undertake a proof of concept (PoC) of a GenAI platform (IBM Watsonx) to explore a baseline AI capability which can be extended for a wide range of policing use cases. The PoC will aim to establish if it is possible to build and support our own AI capability, avoiding the need to purchase point solutions that only have finite use.

Organisations

Avon and Somerset Police
IBM

Challenge

At the time of project initiation, AI use in UK policing was limited to proof-of-concept point solutions. The project aimed to explore the feasibility of developing and productionising GenAI use cases from a single core platform, IBM Watsonx, to achieve cost savings and efficiencies whilst maintaining data sovereignty and security. The project looked at two key policing problems. The first was in the Contact Centre, where approximately 60% of non-emergency calls are triaged out by the switchboard, and we lack reliable management information. The second was categorisation of crimes in alignment with Home Office Counting Rules, which creates significant challenges for all forces in terms of balancing speed with accuracy and consistency.

Innovation or research

The project built and deployed the AI platform to meet UK policing requirements – with particular focus on data sovereignty, security, and future scalability – and then demonstrated its value over two use cases - First Point of Contact (FPOC) insights and Crime Data Integrity (CDI). For FPOC, an AI-driven voice-to-text solution was built that categorised emergency calls, providing actionable insights from previously unrecorded data. This surfaced useable management information on 44,700 call recordings that would have otherwise required over 13,000 hours of manual effort to review and record. For CDI, an AI-driven crime classification solution was built that could analyse low-level crimes and classify them according to the Home Office Counting Rules. This achieved over 96% accuracy and demonstrated the significant potential for AI to support this area of business and deliver efficiencies and benefits.

Findings

The project demonstrated promising results for both use cases. In addition, the project established a robust foundation for forces wishing to develop AI use-cases using the Watsonx platform, ensuring quick and secure deployment aligned with National Blueprint standards. More broadly, the project has provided actionable learning points and suggestions for consideration in future AI projects of this nature – regardless of platform choice. This includes measures to improve accuracy, optimise costs and ensure appropriate checks and balances are built into both the solutions themselves, and the surrounding business processes.

There is certainly potential for building a scalable AI capability using a platform approach, but further exploration of the long-term viability and cost-effectiveness is necessary before investment decisions can be made. This would need to include exploration of the wider elements of the Watsonx portfolio of products that were not part of the scope of this project, and comparison with alternative generative and agentic AI platforms relevant to the policing market.

The continuation of any AI platform approach would require long-term commitment, which is challenging given the speed at which the AI landscape is changing. Forces should take a considered approach to their investment and technical design decisions, with reference to their existing supplier landscape. Many suppliers to policing are rapidly developing and integrating AI features into their products, which may over time have the effect of limiting the number of potential use cases for separately architected AI solutions. The sharing of learning between forces, as well as developing (and maintaining) a good understanding of the market is critical to help informed decision-making.

Next steps

The promising results and potential benefits from the CDI use case mean that developing an AI solution in this business area remains a strategic priority for Avon and Somerset. The methodologies developed during this project, including testing, iterating, and prompt engineering, are transferable and extensible. We will build on the learning obtained during this project and develop an options appraisal with a view to architecting and productionising a solution.