



# TRANSFORMING CRIME INVESTIGATION: A DIGITAL REVOLUTION

**Processes used to collect, store and manage evidence in criminal investigations are becoming digitalised as the police harness the benefits that this represents for the workforce and for service provision. Movement away from traditional 'paper-based' information processing methods allows the**

**force to regain vast amounts of time that can then be allocated to other tasks. Modernisation of information processing also moves the service away from a segregated model of working to a more collaborative unified force, connected by technology.**

In Norfolk and Suffolk, plans are underway to revolutionise the process of safeguarding, recording and managing domestic abuse. The Norfolk and Suffolk Constabulary Digital Transformation Team's mission is to eliminate the need for paperwork and to establish a tool that streamlines the process. The project has been coined the 'Digital Domestic Process' and involves a mobile app

that allows data to be integrated across a number of systems, to allow users to view all of the relevant information regarding an investigation which enables a rapid risk assessment of anyone involved. This in turn facilitates prompt safeguarding of vulnerable individuals where necessary.

The process has revolutionised how officers handle domestic abuse cases, allowing them to conduct real-time searches for information on all systems. A review of the process by safeguarding teams found that it saves time in each case and increased staff's safeguarding capabilities, ultimately resulting in better outcomes for victims.

Currently, constabularies across the UK work according to their own domestic abuse incident policies and processes. However, the development of the Digital Domestic Process has the potential to pave the way for a more connected model of working, taking the design of the application, risk assessment process and its benefits for safeguarding across boundaries. The model for the app has already been shared with Essex, Kent and Greater Manchester Police, and future aspirations for the project involve sharing the model to other forces across the UK. Giving forces the opportunity to create their own app solutions to streamline processing methods.

The police are also adopting innovative ways to process digital media involved in crime investigations. Digital media is emerging as an important tool for investigators, offering insights into criminal activity. This includes text messages, images, videos, audio recordings and social media posts. Leveraging these resources gives officers access to a wealth of information, especially if members of the general public have access to relevant information that could be of use. To handle the growing need to process this kind of information South Yorkshire Police procured a Digital Asset Management System or 'DAMS' from a private company, NICE, as an efficient way of requesting and storing evidence.

A request from the police to send data in this way could raise alarm bells for some members of the public, especially in terms of privacy which has been a hot topic of debate in recent years. However, systems are always designed with security as a top priority, which South Yorkshire Police have implemented.

DAMS allows officers to request information from both public and businesses, providing a trustworthy way for them to send information to the police. DAMS also interfaces with the multitude of other systems that service users to build cases. For example, body worn video footage, digital interview recordings and other crime management systems which create an efficient and integrated flow of information to crime investigators.

The development of DAMS faced challenges, something that is unsurprising when introducing innovative ways of working, and growing pains are to be expected as workforces modernise. Different units are often used to their own processes, a similar hurdle to that faced when implementing the Digital Domestic Process. Units have different ways of processing digital data, and this sometimes involves outdated technology which poses challenges for integration into the new system. However, replacing these systems with a single integrated platform creates a more connected force and provides better security, driving successful outcomes for investigations. DAMS has now been implemented across South Yorkshire Police, paving the way for a securer and more connected future for policing.

