



## Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee

### Report title: Live Facial Recognition

**Date:** 22 July 2024

**Key decision:** No

**Class:** Part 1

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Contributors:** Benjamin Awkal, Scrutiny Manager, and Acting Chief Inspector Duncan Jackson, Metropolitan Police Service

### Outline and recommendations

The Committee is recommended to consider and discuss the information in this report and make recommendations as appropriate.

## 1. Summary

- 1.1. This report refers to the Committee information it requested from the Metropolitan Police Service regarding Live Facial Recognition technology.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Committee is recommended to consider and discuss the information in this report and make recommendations as appropriate.

## 3. Background

- 3.1. In March 2024, the Metropolitan Police Service began using Live Facial Recognition in Lewisham.
- 3.2. This report contains the Metropolitan Police Service's response to questions put to it by the Committee with the aims of:
  - a. better understanding the operation, capabilities, efficacy, human rights risks, ethics and legal basis of the Metropolitan Police Service's Live Facial Recognition (LFR) technology;
  - b. considering the use case for LFR and potential future uses;
  - c. considering how LFR is being used and the results it has produced in Lewisham and other London boroughs; and
  - d. evaluating how the Safer Lewisham Partnership and Police are working together and communicating with the public and other stakeholders regarding LFR's introduction and use in Lewisham.

## 4. Questions and response

- 4.1. How does LFR work, what are its benefits and how accurate is it (including in relation to protected characteristics)?

*LFR works in mapping particular measurements of someone's face. These measurements either remain unchanged or experience very small changes during their life. The past and current image is compared by the computer. If the likelihood of the two people being the same rates as 0.6 or more an alert is given to the operator who tasks officers to approach the subject. The system cannot and will not work without the human decision making element. Once officers speak to the subject they carryout standard police enquiries and make decisions around whether the subject needs to be arrested.*

*The system is overt and well publicised, with approved signage setup on all approaches to the van. Uniformed police staff all deployments. The cameras capture images of any person that enters the operational area. Their facial image is compared to those on the database loaded to the van that day. If a match is found then the image taken is stored for 30 days if there is no match then the system automatically deletes the one captured. Any person that does not match to the list appears as a pixelated image on the operator's screen.*

*In the event of a match the details are sent to handheld devices assigned to officers on the operation. This includes details of the person from the database,*

*the file image associated with that person and the image taken by the camera that day. This is all intended to inform conversation with the subject when stopped.*

*Protected characteristics.*

*The LFR used by the MPS has gone through various layers of testing and evaluation. Trials of the LFR system have taken place over the last 4 years. This has included independent studies to establish whether there is any increased likelihood of a false match from subjects with particular characteristics. This study found there was no increased likelihood for any protected characteristics. The results of this along with a demonstration of the system were presented to the MPS Race IAG who identified no issues of potential discrimination.*

4.2. What are the use cases for LFR and LFR's tactical alternatives?

*The tactical use of LFR is as above to be used overtly to aid in the identification of wanted persons in a public space.*

*The alternatives to LFR is the use of super recogniser officers in key locations or monitoring council CCTV. On average a super recogniser can process 1,000 different people whereas the computer can process around 15,000.*

*Every deployment has to be authorised by a Superintendent and the Chief Superintendent for the Basic Command Unit covering that deployment area must also approve its use.*

4.3. How might LFR be used in the future?

*At this time there are no plans to expand its usage beyond overt, staffed deployments. MOPAC [Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime] and the College of Policing have and will continue to have oversight of any use of LFR in the MPS. The oversight committee hold meetings every 6-8 weeks.*

4.4. What is the legal basis for the use of LFR by the Police?

*Common law principle of prevention and detection of crime. It is used in public spaces.*

*Storage and use of data is governed by the Information Commissioner's Office. The storage and use are justified under the prevention and detection of crime. The main reason that no plans exist to extend LFR to council CCTV is that the data used as the reference list is owned by the NPCC and MPS respectively. Private LFR systems do operate but they are separate from the MPS and work off the owning company's controlled lists.*

*Like all publicly operated CCTV systems it is operated adhering to the Data Protection Act 2018.*

4.5. What are the human rights and ethical considerations of LFR – including consent, privacy and disproportionality – and how are they being mitigated?

*[Human Rights] clearly is a consideration for everything we do. Specifically for*

*LFR Article 5 No punishment; Article 8 – Right to a private life;*

4.6. Re the deployment of LFR in Lewisham and other boroughs:

- a. Please can the data available, with protected characteristic breakdowns where possible, on the deployment of LFR including number of scans, true matches, false-positive matches and outcomes resulting from true matches (with arrests broken down by offence types), be provided.

*Inline with MOPAC and College of Policing guidance data involving how many scans, demographics of those stopped or arrested are not recorded or published.*

- b. What images do the police use to make up watchlists and where are they sourced from? Have police been using private company databases such as PimEyes? Do police scrape images from social media?

*The list used is made up of those wanted by English courts on warrants; those wanted in connection with offences by the MPS with a power of arrest. Additionally there are people who are on the sex offenders register who have conditions in place.*

*LFR does not use other databases such as the example of PimEye given in the question.*

- c. Please can the profile of the police watchlists be provided (with a demographic breakdown if possible): type of offences, offending status e.g. wanted for arrest, by courts etc.

*A breakdown of the list used is not possible. It is not searchable by protected characteristic.*

- d. Do the police use LFR in conjunction with retrospective facial recognition? For instance, Met Police policy documents say that they will retain the CCTV images of a person walking past an LFR camera even if there is no 'match.' Are such images then run against other databases to identify people in a retrospective capacity?

*LFR is a separate system to retrospective facial recognition. The system is wiped daily and only those subjects who have returned a positive match are saved.*

4.7. How has the Safer Lewisham Partnership been collaborating re the use of LFR in Lewisham, and how have the Police and local community safety partnerships have collaborated re LFR in other boroughs?

*Collaborative working in Lewisham has seen feedback being given that has informed the positioning of officers involved in the operation. Additionally we have raised awareness around the use of LFR as a tactic.*

4.8. How have the Police and Safer Lewisham Partnership been engaging with public and other key stakeholders – such as the Safer Neighbourhood Board

and Independent Advisory Group – regarding the deployment of LFR in Lewisham, and how have the Police and community safety partnerships have approached the issue in other boroughs?

*The IAG, SNB and Lewisham Council Members have received separate briefing sessions around LFR. This is similar to other boroughs where LFR has been deployed.*

- 4.9. How is community monitoring and oversight being undertaken in Lewisham and other boroughs?

*The oversight of LFR is undertaken by MOPAC, the College of policing and Office of Information Commissioner. General local discussion is held locally but the system and tactics of the operation is not overseen nor are there any plans for it to be overseen locally.*

- 4.10. What has the response to the introduction of LFR in Lewisham and other boroughs been?

*By in large the introduction of LFR into Lewisham has been positively received. The same can be seen in other boroughs. Initial scepticism is overcome when the positive results of what people have been arrested for are known.*

## **5. Financial implications**

- 5.1. There are no direct financial implications for the Council arising from this report.

## **6. Legal implications**

- 6.1. As the Council's crime and disorder scrutiny committee, the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee is empowered to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities – the Council, the Police, the Probation Service, the Fire Service and the Integrated Care Board – of their crime and disorder functions – the formulation and implementation of strategies for the reduction of crime and disorder, combatting the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances, reducing re-offending and the prevention and reduction of serious violence – and to make reports or recommendations to the Council with respect to the discharge of those functions. The Committee must share any reports or recommendations with the responsible and co-operating bodies or persons and require them to consider and respond to the reports or recommendations and have regard to them in the exercise of their functions.<sup>1</sup>
- 6.2. The Committee is empowered to request information from responsible bodies and co-operating persons and authorities in relation to the discharge, or decisions made or other actions taken in connection with, the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions or local crime and

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<sup>1</sup> Section 19, Police and Justice Act 2006

disorder matters in relation to which the Committee has functions.<sup>2</sup>

6.3. There are no direct legal implications for the Council arising from this report.

## **7. Equalities implications**

7.1. There are no direct equalities implications for the Council arising from this report.

## **8. Report author(s) and contact**

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8.2. Acting Chief Inspector, Duncan Jackson, Metropolitan Police Service

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<sup>2</sup> Regulation 5, The Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2006