

The Biometrics Commissioner gave evidence to the Science and Technology Committee on 19 March 2019. During the session, the Commissioner mentioned to the Committee that other police forces, aside from the Met and South Wales Police, were about to trial facial recognition. Enquiries to his office resulted in the following response:

"The Home Office Police Digital Service is supporting operational pilots in police forces. In Kent and the West Midlands officers will use facial recognition in video for a limited period of time. Officers may use the technology where there is a risk of harm to the missing or vulnerable person.

The pilots will reuse CCTV gathered by the police in looking for a missing or vulnerable person. The pilots are overseen by the Law Enforcement Facial Images and New Biometric Modalities Oversight and Advisory Board. The pilots will help to assess the ethics and proportionality in the use of the technology.

The minutes of the Oversight Board do also mention these trials, albeit very briefly. I also understand that the forces carrying out the trials will be undertaking some public engagement".

Please confirm the following:

1. Whether West Midlands Police are intending to trial a program as described above

West Midlands Police have been approached to contribute to the trial, however, no commitment to contribute has been made to date.

Therefore, under FOI there is no recorded information held. However, to assist, if any trials are to be considered the proposal must pass through our internal governance processes which will assess the Ethical, Technical and Operational aspects of the proposal.

2. What facial recognition program or software is being used and which company provides it

Under FOI there is no recorded information held. However, to assist, if any trials are to be considered this would need to be part of the internal governance process. The requirements (both software and hardware) would then be identified and would enable the force to make an informed choice on product (soft/hardware) selection if the proposal was successful.

3. What hardware is being used and which company provides it

Under FOI there is no recorded information held. However, to assist, if any trials are to be considered this would need to be part of internal governance process. The requirements (both software and hardware) would then be identified and would enable the force to make an informed choice on product (soft/hardware) selection if the proposal was successful.

4. When the trial will start and end

Under FOI there is no recorded information held. However to assist, if any trials are to be considered this would need to be passed through internal governance and a

date would then be formally agreed. Equally, governance would confirm the end date of the proposal.

5. What the success criteria is for the trial

Under FOI there is no recorded information held. However, to assist, if any trials are to be considered this would centre around the identification and safeguarding of vulnerable/missing persons.

6. What the oversight measures are for the trial

Under FOI there is no recorded information held. However, to assist, if any trials are to be considered this would need to be passed through internal governance. If the proposal is successful, oversight would be a collaborative effort with the national team referenced in this request.

7. Where the CCTV footage will be taken from

Under FOI there is no recorded information held. However, to assist, this would be understood if the proposal passes successfully through governance.

8. What criteria will be used to identify which CCTV to use in the trial

Under FOI there is no recorded information held. However, to assist, this would be understood if the proposal passes successfully through governance.

9. Where images for the "watchlist"/matching will be taken from

Under FOI there is no recorded information held. However, to assist, this would be understood if the proposal passes successfully through governance.

10. What the criteria will be for selecting images for the "watchlist"/matching

Under FOI there is no recorded information held. However, to assist, this would be understood if the proposal passes successfully through governance.

11. What human rights impact assessment has been done (please provide a copy)

Under FOI there is no recorded information held. However, to assist, this would be understood if the proposal passes successfully through governance.

12. What privacy impact assessment has been done (please provide a copy)

Under FOI there is no recorded information held. However, to assist, this would be understood if the proposal passes successfully through governance.

13. What assessment has been done of potential bias within the facial recognition program (i.e. reduced accuracy against women and people of colour) (please provide a copy)

Under FOI there is no recorded information held. However, to assist, this would be understood if the proposal passes successfully through governance.

14. What public consultation has taken place or will take place

Under FOI there is no recorded information held. However, to assist, this would be understood if the proposal passes successfully through governance.

15. Whether West Midlands Police are currently using or trialling, or intend to use or trial, any other form of facial recognition

Under FOI there is no recorded information held. However, to assist, the Force (as per any other organisation) does look across industries to see what technological capability are available which could support protecting the public. However, if any trials are to be considered this would need to be passed successfully through internal governance.

In addition to the above, West Midlands Police can neither confirm nor deny that it holds any other information relevant to this request as the duty in Section 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 does not apply by virtue of the following exemptions:

Section 24(2) – National security
Section 31(3) – Law enforcement