

What is Live Facial Recognition?

Live Facial Recognition (LFR), is technology that can identify a person from a digital image. The technology can be used to assist in the prevention and detection of crime by identifying wanted criminals.

Is West Midlands Police Using Facial Recognition?

Update (12/05/2021)

In relation to the Force Business Transformation Department, that sits within WMP and is the department that deals with Facial Recognition, regarding overt Live Facial Recognition technology, we can advise that at this moment in time, the force is not using or trialling overt Facial Recognition software.

The force has been approached by the Home Office regarding a potential trial of Facial Recognition software. But no formal commitment has been made by WMP to support this, and any future initiative would have to pass through our internal governance (including Information Security and Ethics). Additionally there is ongoing consultation between the Home office and the ICO (information Commissioners Office).

Any research in relation to a potential trial would have been carried out by the Home Office, and any information in relation to this would be held by the Home Office and not by the force.

Previously the force has considered Facial Recognition as part of a pilot. This was for the use of Facial Recognition in a post-incident, intelligence led setting. However, upon investigating the viability of the use case, the force identified that the technology required to convert media into a format useable by the Artificial Intelligence platform wasn't mature enough. Based on these findings there was no value in pursuing that element of the pilot further (this would also be the point where Ethics and Governance would need consultation on reputational/ethical impacts), therefore facial recognition was de-scoped from the pilot.

This information will be updated every 6 months.

Information in relation to any other useage across the force is not held in a retrievable format. This is not recorded centrally or in an electronically searchable format. To try and retrieve this information would require approaching and liaising with every department within the force. This means that the cost of providing the information would be above the amount to which we are legally required to respond i.e. the cost of confirming or denying that the information is held would exceed the 'appropriate level' as stated in the Freedom of Information (Fees and Appropriate Limit) Regulations 2004.

In addition, the force can neither confirm nor deny that it holds any other information in relation to covert useage or trials 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