

Within the NPCC's Digital Forensic Science Strategy 2020, the Transforming Forensics Programme identified a backlog of digital evidence examination as the first challenge that the field faces in recent years.

How many pieces of digital evidence are currently awaiting examination and how long would you estimate the backlog to be cleared?

At the date of this request we had 70 computer exhibits and 370 mobile devices awaiting examination. None of the computers are out of Service Level Agreements. 10 Mobile devices are outside of Service Level Agreements but are prioritised and due to be cleared, 187 in standard outside of Service Level Agreements which is addressed and reviewed weekly and should be back to Service Level Agreements within the next few months.

Of the 3 core challenges outlined within this strategy (Volume of devices, Complexity of investigations and the Legitimacy of evidence) does your force consider the volume of devices for examination the most significant factor in the establishment of evidence backlog?

This question is not valid under s8(1)(c) of the FOI Act

Alternatively do other factors such as staff shortages, labour costs and training deficits play a more significant role?

This question is not valid under s8(1)(c) of the FOI Act

What impact has a backlog had on investigation and what measures are being taken to prevent a backlog from impacting prosecution rates?

Any jobs with court dates due are prioritised to ensure the investigation can progress. We review on a weekly basis the position of our incoming demand and allocate accordingly.

How many cases have been dropped due to a lack of readily available digital evidence?

None that we have been made aware of.