



Digital Storage Policy

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Policy Owner	Head of Force Control Room & Operations Planning
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This document has been assessed for:	
Compliance with Legislation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Equality Impact Assessment	<input type="checkbox"/> Not required
Freedom of Information issues	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Human Rights compliance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Health and Safety	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Risk Management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Digital Storage Policy

1. Policy statement

Crime Management Support Bureau (CMSB) currently stores around 700 boxes of crime related paperwork with Restore. Officers and staff send CMSB all material relating to crime investigations which do not result in court proceedings (otherwise it is sent to Criminal Justice Unit). CMSB reviews the paperwork and removes any material already saved elsewhere (e.g. PNC prints). They file the remainder against the crime / incident number and endorse the Niche investigation log to that effect. The material is kept locally for about a year before it is archived at Restore. After 7 years CMSB recovers the paperwork and separates the MOPI 1 material which goes back into storage for another 50+ years. The rest is destroyed.

In October 2011, the Criminal Justice Service Efficiency Programme commenced intending to deliver a fully digital end to end process without the need for paper in the prosecution process. Digital enablement meant that agreement was reached between Criminal Justice agencies regarding the use of an electronic signature for witness statements on the basis that a 'wet' signature on the original statement is no more reliable than a digital one. Ultimately if the veracity of the signature is challenged the appropriate response would be to call the witness to prove the making of the statement and the signature.

Transferring and storing paper is slow and costly and these inefficiencies have long been recognised as an aspect which needs modernisation.

The force is storing significant amounts of documentation related to crime investigations. This initiative is designed to reduce and cut-off, at source, any incoming documentation thereby reducing the need for future longer-term 'hard' storage. All documentation will be stored digitally for the required periods.

For some time now other forces (including Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Merseyside) have been scanning evidence and other material into Niche and disposing of the original documents on the basis that there is no legislative or regulatory requirement for an 'original' document to be at court.

Officers and staff will be responsible for uploading all documents into Niche and subsequently disposing of the originals.

Cases managed via "HOLMES" are not in scope.

2. Purpose

The aim is to establish a new operational practice for the management and storage of information / documentation / evidence. This reflects and complements the evolving landscape regarding the increased and embedded use of digital technology and documentation.

Data Protection

No issues have been identified by other forces.

Retention & MOPI

MOPI and other review, retain, destroy guidance will be managed as per the national guidance. Scanned images will be retained according to MOPI classifications and Data Protection guidelines.

CPS / HMCTS engagement

In other forces no issues were identified from either agency. It was confirmed that there is no legislative or regulatory requirement for an 'original' document to be at court. The CPS position concerning original statements at court as agreed by the DPP is clear and set out as follows: It is unnecessary to have paper versions of statements at court when digital documents are being used; it will be necessary to have a 'failsafe' procedure for exceptional cases in which there is a challenge in court to the authenticity of a statement.

Digital Witness Statements (DWS)

The introduction of the DWS has removed any requirement for a 'wet' signature. A DWS (as with other evidential documentation) is immediately 'locked down' at the point of signing. Should a request be made for sight of an 'original' statement, the printed document would come from the locked down version held within Niche. The force is developing an agile working strategy that will eventually remove the requirement for 'hard' paper statements.

Communication Strategy

A comprehensive communication strategy has been developed along with a process guide and poster for use around the force (See Appendix 1 – Scanning Principles for Original Documents).

3. Underpinning procedures

If hard copy material is received it will be scanned onto Niche and once the copy held has been 'quality assured' the original will be destroyed.

Scanning Principles for Original Documents

DWS allows officers / staff to type statements directly into the system and obtain an electronic signature from the victim / witness. This is the approved method for obtaining a statement and should always be the first option. It saves time as there is no printing or scanning required.

Where DWS is not possible original statements and documents should be scanned into Niche, compliance checked, and the original disposed of accordingly following a simple 3 stage process:

SCAN

- Ensure the document is correctly scanned and uploaded into Niche;
- Attached accordingly, i.e. against the 'person' or 'case';
- Compliant with the force naming convention.

CHECK

- Ensure the document can be located and is viewable.

DISPOSE

- It is the OIC's responsibility to ensure the document is securely scanned into NICHE and is viewable;
- Once satisfied the OIC may safely dispose of the original document and any network stored copy.

ACTION BY CRIME MANAGEMENT SUPPORT BUREAU (CMSB)

- Any material incorrectly sent to CMSB will be returned to the OIC with a request to process in accordance with this policy;
- Any bulky items which are impossible to scan will be stored in line with existing policy.

4. Appendices

Appendix	Description
1.	Scanning Principles for Original Documents

5. Compliance and monitoring

The Head of Force Control Room & Operations Planning is responsible for the accuracy and integrity of this document. This policy will be continuously monitored, and updated when appropriate, to ensure full compliance with legislation.

The Head of Force Control Room & Operations Planning will review this process to ensure that all aspects are being adhered to in accordance with the framework of this policy.

6. Version control

This policy will be reviewed and updated at least every three years by the owner, and more frequently if necessary.

The Corporate Services Department will ensure this document is available on the Force intranet, including any interim updates.

The following identifies all version changes.

Version	Date	Reason for update	Author
0.1	Sept 2019	New policy for consultation	[REDACTED]
0.2	Oct 2019	Revised following consultation	[REDACTED]
1.0	Nov 2019	Policy approved and published	[REDACTED]
1.1	Aug 2021	Policy review	[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

SCANNING PRINCIPLES FOR ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS



Niche Digital Witness Statement (DWS) allows officers/staff to type statements directly into the system and obtain an electronic signature from the victim/witness.



DIGITAL WITNESS STATEMENT (DWS)

- Approved method for obtaining a statement.
- Should always be your first consideration.
- Saves time as there is no printing or scanning required.

Where DWS is not possible

Original statements and documents should be scanned into Niche, compliance checked and the original disposed of accordingly.



SCAN

- Ensure the document is correctly scanned and uploaded into NICHE.
- Attached accordingly i.e. against the 'person' or 'case'.
- Compliant with the naming convention.

CHECK

You must ensure the document can be located and is viewable.



DISPOSE

- It is your responsibility to ensure the document is securely scanned into NICHE and viewable.
- Once you are satisfied you may safely dispose of the original document and any network stored copy.