

CSI London part 2: The City Police's CSI System as an Easy Management Tool

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Last week we discussed how the City of London Police's CSI system, eFex, helps SOCOs track and manage every forensic exhibit. In this second article we look at how eFex - now available to all forces as a modular system – is also an extremely useful management tool to generate management statistics instantly.

Generating Home Office Statistics

According to Ian Gray who back in 2000 was DS in the Scientific Support Unit, "Once the system was up and running successfully as a one-stop-shop for all our exhibits, it was adjusted to give us the information to fulfil Home Office requirements for their audit." Over the years that eFEx has been in place, for example following in the wake of the MOPI report, the Home Office changed their requirements a few times concerning what information they wanted and under what headings. Initially, as many of you will remember, there were a couple of thousand types of crime and it was difficult even to assess which was which. These crime descriptions were then substantially reduced to a fraction of these key headings. But through it all, the City of London Police, like other forces, had to draw off statistics in changing fields.

"Developing eFex with a consultant was an extremely fluid process and allowed us to develop the system further over time," says Gray. "We can draw off a large amount of management data easily and in the fields required by the Home Office." In fact, a recent Home Office audit report, noted eFex favourably in a report. "This task then became a simple operation, just a touch of a button. Now we can just print off a report as forensic data changes, for home office needs as well as management reviews," says Gray.

Feedback for Officer Training and Development

eFex was also modified to generate other statistics. For example, how many DNA or fingerprint matches were taken at the crime scene. This, explains Gray, allows the Detective Sergeant to look at notes and review the case: "I have also found eFex to be a great help as a management tool. It allowed me to review the performance of individual SOCOs for training and development purposes. I could see if, for example, a particular officer tended to be great at getting DNA hits but weak of getting good fingerprints that they may need some additional training in powdering up. This type of pure data is extremely valuable, not as part of a league tables exercise, but ultimately to support victims of crime better in making sure we can help our officers, as a force, with their own development and skills."

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Low Cost Upgrades and Flexibility

Because eFex has been developed initially by a consultancy consortium, the City Police could easily and inexpensively adapt eFex to these ongoing changes. In fact, the system had been configured so that the admin or officers could change it themselves without even going to the IT department. However, sometimes the City Police still elected to call in the consultancy as they only charged for an hour's work altering some fields and tables. This underlines an important point about the ongoing low cost and flexibility of eFex.

Detecting with Holmes

eFex has also proved useful for working alongside the HOLMES system in major enquiries.

"Obviously HOLMES is a system on a standalone computer," says Gray, "However, our exhibits officers have used eFex in parallel to HOLMES, for example cross referencing various lab reports produced on eFex. Because both systems are on the intranet, officers could do this easily in one go from any computer, accessing and adding information from both systems."

Gray praises eFex for its contribution to all aspects of the forensics process: "For the most part, eFex has given us time and efficiency savings and been a great benefit to officers and management. However, it has also proved vital in the courtroom as the defence is now faced with such good DNA/scientific evidence that they concentrate their challenge on inefficiencies in the forensics process. We need the sophistication nowadays that eFex offers."

And eFex's use in the courtroom is the subject of our third and final article next week. In the high-profile shooting outside the 2004 music awards, eFex not only helped officers track the case in real time over different crime scenes and working at different stations, but provided such high continuity and integrity of evidence that the suspect pleaded guilty on day one.

For more information or a free consultation, please contact us today.

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