THAMES VALLEY TOGETHER

Data Ethics Committee
1st December 2021
12 – 14.30

Present

Mark Sheehan	Chair
Lewis Prescott-Mayling	DCI, Data and Targeting Lead, VRU
Kyriakos Kotsoglou	Senior Lecturer, Northumbria University
Tori Olphin	Data Scientist, TV Together Project
Tim Lowe	Research Lead and Ethics Committee Manager, VRU
Chris Lloyd	Senior Lecturer, Oxford Brookes University
Eric Twigg	Chair of Wokingham SAIG
Mark Warner	Senior Lecturer, Northumbria University
Daniel Whiting	Forensic Psychiatric, Oxford
Jo Caluori	Head of Research and Policy, Crest Advisory

Apologies

Sharon Warwick	Sylvia Simmonds
Marion Peuleve	Dave Powell
Stan Gilmour	Alice Kunjappy-Clifton
Dave Powell	

Please note, when performing their duties as chair they will be referred to as the chair in the minutes. When commenting on the specifics of a use case that is presented they, like others, will be referred to as a committee member to sustain anonymity.

1. Welcome/Introductions/Apologies – The Chair

The chair welcomed the group and invited the attendees to introduce themselves. He advised that the meeting was being recorded; these are for minuting purposes and for Dave Powell's research. The Committee agreed the minutes of the last meeting were accurate.

2. ToR confirmation/discussion

- **Final discussion of comments**

Attributions within Minutes -Tim Lowe/The Chair

A Committee Member had previously discussed this with TL. **They** agreed with the amendments that had been made (Pg 3) in the ToR. There were no other comments.

Equality and Discrimination – Tim Lowe/The Chair

TL felt this was a more complex request and best for the Committee to discuss and agree. The questions being: -

"Should there be a caveat added here to account for the difference that which will be implemented to engage in an affirmative action to counter instances where algorithmic equality would lead to inequality."

A committee member: Requested clarification as to what extent we rely on the Equality Act terms and not politically loaded terms. **A committee member**: The Committee's ToR is an ethical document and not a legal one. Diversity did not feature in the set of ethical considerations. TL: Confirmed that diversity did not appear in the ToR, however, equality does. **A committee member**: A point should be made in the ToR that the data is not going to be used to discriminate, however if the data provided does look skewed is there going to be a counterbalance. TO: The data that is used to produce algorithms is historic data and therefore has bias within it. The Committee needed to consider things that might make the algorithm less accurate overall. **A committee member**: Ethical principles are covered in the introduction. It states that "the following ethical considerations will be taken into account." The Committee can take them into account and on an individual case by case basis. Then decide how the Committee are going to take these into account. **A committee member**: Made it clear that he disagreed, and that having an algorithm which allegedly tries to incorporate ethical considerations, in his opinion, was a categorical error. **A committee member**: The Committee are not saying anything about the nature of the algorithm, the considerations are considerations that they use in thinking about the ethics of a particular proposed used case. Due to time constraints, **two members agreed to discuss this further outside of the meeting and report back to the Committee.**

- **Voting on member requested point**

"The core committee members will have one vote each with the majority vote cast will be considered the overall view of the committee on a used case. A written decision will be captured in the minutes. Members may abstain from voting. The way in which each member votes will not be captured in the minutes unless this is specifically requested (Pg 6).

A committee member: The statement about decision making should be omitted and replaced with a statement saying that the decision making should be determined by a case-by-case basis as a product of what we are considering and who we think should be involved. TO: The statement could be reclarified as a vote on recommendations. That if the Committee is going to make a formal recommendation to decision makers, that, as a committee, they must vote on it, whereas the overall thing is the decision, and all the points of view are valid. **A committee member**: The option would still have the Committee making a decision; the decision is a recommendation. He added that part of the reason for having the three stages was so the Committee could be flexible about involving other groups and individuals. LPM: When the Committee advises the police service of their views, they need to be happy that they have captured their views as a committee in a narrative rather than a vote. The police service will be putting a lot of weight on the Committee's views, so we want to understand what they are. **A committee member**: The question for the group was to what extent did they want this to function as a committee, or whether they wanted it to function as a core organising group. Does the Committee consider itself as a committee or rather a recommendation organising group?

A committee member: If the Committee did not agree on a uniform form, then there is a concern about inequality in the Committee's decision making, on a case-by-case basis. The Committee needed to know how they were going to deal with each case. **A committee member**: Should the whole of the section be changed to recommendations rather than decisions and that would be less definitive. **A committee member**: The idea of having a binding vote artificially elevated the power of the body. To make such a concrete decision whether a step down from that mitigates some of that whilst providing a clear outcome. **The Chair: Confirmed that the Committee had agreed that the decision to recommend or not recommend was the decision.** Adding the suggestion to have step two more explicitly about a

process for developing a recommendation. There were important groups that could be involved in making a recommendation on a case-by-case basis. TO: It would be for the committee to decide if they needed information from an additional group, once that information was received, they would then vote on the recommendation. LPM: I thought there was something in there where we added if you wanted as a committee to give someone else a vote, you can give them a vote. If this was not already present, it could be written into the ToR, allowing the Committee to give someone else a vote. **A committee member**: Phase two was to decide who gets to be involved in the generation of recommendation. **A committee member**: Other groups should be consulted to ensure all views are considered. **A committee member**: Changing of the words, decision making to recommendations, another word that might make it better, support, the committee supports this initiative, rather than a recommendation. **A committee member**: The Committee's recommendation would be one of support rather than one of approval. TO: The discussion was around the overall project and whether they support the overall thing. Some of the process issues would also be recommendations **A committee member**: It was about saying if the Committee, in principle, agree/disagree and these were their recommendations regarding the specifics. Support means that the Committee has given the green light, it either a yes or no. **A committee member**: At some point the Committee were going to have to decide whether they were going to support it or not.

The Chair: Confirmed that the Committee's decision was to replace decision making with recommendation.

TL – Addition to ToR stating any comments made by an individual about the Committee's decision whilst not encouraged must be made in accordance with the ToR and acknowledged as distinct from the Committee's view.

The Committee agreed with this addition.

3.   **DARAT Presentation (Second) and Discussion – Tori Olphin**
      All members received a copy of the presentation prior to the meeting.

4.   **DARAT Discussion**
      - Process and consultation

A committee member: How are suspects used in the data bearing in mind that a suspect can be a random person who is in the location. How are suspects used in that particular case?
TO: Suspects are being used, in domestic incidents, and therefore they are not random people. If a suspect is identified, it is in a relationship with the person. The police have been told this person is likely to have committed the offense.
A committee member: It is to make sure that the model has got authenticity with the wider public, should this information come into the public domain.

A committee member: There is a general point to flag this idea of a lot of the data classifications have been police judgement related classifications and there is a question about that.

A committee member: Explain what type of practical decisions, in terms of what the police do with that information?
TO: It would be possible to enforce that the information could only be used to make a decision in a particular way, if the risk assessment was given to police with no guidance they could arrest the person, decide to put more investigative resources into a case, they could also decide that

the victim might need safeguarding and give additional services to the victim. There are lots of toolboxes that the police have access to, it may not be the police, it may be partner agencies.

A committee member: It sounds like there are potentially some relatively harmful interventions that could be linked to it, the potential harm false positive of some of the decisions has got to guild increased sensitively and specificity and that must play into those decisions.

A committee member: The use of the words suspect and victim. The police, or any divisive supporting system tool, has no business entering the domain of a court, deciding who is a victim and who is not a victim. The Committee need to find a more accurate way, not neutral, but accurate way of expressing some factual claims without entering the domain the decision making from a tribunal or court.

A committee member: The model seems to be both over inclusive and under inclusive at the same time. Slide 4 lists 10% of the criminals of England and Wales, from ABH to Terrorism. Is that so important in the context of domestic abuse?
TO: Most of those things will not appear in a domestic incident however, if they did it would be high risk. It is to give it enough scope to be future proofed.

A committee member: There is an absence of psychological harm or risk, the Committee should make cover of that.
TO: Suicide is included. Which is not currently included in any other work that is being done anywhere in the world in relation to domestic abuse. We do not have measure of phycology harm we don't assess that anywhere in society, we do not record it and we certainly do no tie it to police decisions.

A committee member: Does so called non-crime hate incidents feed into the tool. Are they classified as hate crime?
TO: Yes, they are.

A committee member: The cases where hate is an element of murder which only becomes a factor in sentencing but not recorded as hate crime, it is just murder, with a hate element. Will it form the other tool?
 TO: They are separate fields within the data. One is the type of occurrence, and some of those maybe non-crimes but maybe not a crime occurrence but something has happened, and one of them will where there was a hate indicator of any type and what that was.

A committee member: If an officer goes to a scene where the wife has been beaten the initial impact is that the wife is a victim, and the partner is the suspect. If that husband has been a subject of constantly being berated over several years, and he is just lashed out, is he the victim and the wife the suspect?
TO: This needs more thought. On one hand, if the suspect only model is something Dave Powell has requested this could be a way, we look at this problem, so to some degree that is going to continue that side, the whole occurrence model. If people are treated as people and do not identify what they were in this incident, but look at what has happened previously, there may be ways moving some of it in and out scope.

A committee member: Regarding the refinement of the model. If there is a reduction in sensitivity but an increase on the other side, how is this decided?
TO: Multiply versions of the model with different accuracies and different slants would be brough to this group and ask, essentially are there any of these you think are just an unethical

choice, and out of the other ones are you happy if police choose one of those, or none of them are a choice that you would say don't make that one.

A committee member: How do you envisage simplifying the model, using a different modelling technique or a reduction in the number of features incorporated within the model itself? Then how is this being presented to the cop on the ground? Things like uncertainty in the prediction is this something that is going to be presented or you envisage presenting to the officer,

TO: To some degree there will be level of how simply the explanation can be put and how can it be phrased it in the right way, there will be a degree of reducing the number of variables so that it becomes easier to comprehend and so that the graphic they are shown on how it works, is easier to understand. Another way would be that it may be possible to show a cop in an understandable way a Random Forest made a given decision. This needs further thought but it is easier to understand how a logistic regression makes the decision. And we will need to way up the pros and cons of both of those

A committee member: It is difficult for us to respond unless you can model the impact of that output, if this was how we would find the model, if we were to deploy this this would be the result.

TO: This is an impactful thing it is only right that we give it the care in designing it that is worthy of this discussion. A wider conversation later about what things the Committee would like to see in relation to each of the models so that you can be informed to make a recommendation.

LPM: How we record whether someone is a suspect, or a victim is about the way policing works, not the model. Perhaps the language is not appropriate when we present it and talk about it. TO is talking about the field that is filled in on the data system saying suspect or victim, around our operational use of the system. It is just a way of recording it, we must report this to the public and Home Office how much of these types of crime we have. Where the use of data to be presented in such a way to the human can it make that human make a better more informed decision. Not automate that human's decision. Some of the decisions are operational, and we must not lose sight of the fact that policing is making these decisions today and will continue to make these decisions. It is just whether it is better to do them in a different way.

A committee member: It is around the classification of the suspect and the victim, but also associated other terms that TO outlined, like domestic, so the question is whether all the things we wanted to count as being relevant always gets called domestic or not. TO used the phrase flags and warnings relating to the suspect, it may well have been a flag or warning, they lived in one of room of the house where drugs were being taken and the flag is related to them. We could pay some attention to the ways in which those things might skew the data. If we are thinking about the bias of the data going in it seems like those kinds of decisions are the places where that might happen.

TO: There will be some consideration down the line around the bias and whether it treats different groups differently based on certain variables being a part of it which may well point out certain variables. That police put more of a certain marker on a certain part of the community that is therefore purely an inherent bias that is causing the model to be less accurate. We must go with the best information which we have. We may take some things out because they cause problems, whether the police put a violent maker on someone is more

related to their ethnicity as to whether to committee violent offences. If that were there case, we don't want to use that marker.

A committee member: Rather than comparing a range of models in lab conditions we are comparing some model of what is already happening with a far higher level of imperfection and error. It tilts the ethical balance in favour of using the model early and making refinements though use instead of refining it before use. It would be interesting to know more when officers who make these judgements based on the one incident are shown how wrong the judgements are through reflecting on outcomes over time, how they can identify why the decisions that they make were so wrong even within the scene, so identifying biases would be early interesting as a qualitative piece of work around the data work.

TO: One of the problems with DASH is that cops are never told what happens to the victim that they have graded at whatever risk.

A committee member: Use and demonstration is better rather than the detailed knowledge.

A committee member: Concerned about seeing the words suspect or victim in a digital tool. At the time the digital tool calls someone a suspect, the decision has not been made yet, so it is pre-empting the decision of police.

TO: To clarify the suspect model would not be used unless someone has been identified as a suspect. If police haven't made that identification, it would say this person is a suspect, that is not what it is to do. It is to say that once police have decided someone is a suspect, what does it think the risk is that that suspect becomes a suspect again.

A committee member: Which does not solve the problem with calling someone a victim, who has not been declared a victim.

LPM: In the current business there is a trigger point where we receive a call about a domestic incident where we decide on the likelihood of future harm to the victim. In that business process there is currently a risk assessment decision made by the police officer, we want to, at that point, use the algorithm to help inform that police officers' decision. The first call we ever get, we might have it the wrong way round, it goes to TO's point as to whether the model should predict either or whether the model should decide the possibility of a future event between these two people.

6.   **Voting/outlining of Committee requests**

The Chair: Items for next consideration.

- Further discussion around the risk classification, what counts as high-risk medium risk etc. Offline conversation.
- The idea of the connections between the use of the algorithm and the use of the tool, decision about specificity and sensitivity.
- The way in which the guidance in the decision-making process for the officer at the scene, you were thinking about how to specify the role the tool would play and in that was going to be guidance for its use in decision-making and it was going to include some explanation of the way in which the tool came up with it. I think it would be useful to

have a look at what that guidance might look like. Perhaps using the model that we already have as an indicative thing.

- How those judgements are made regarding suspect and victim, and how they feature.
- Moving towards implementation, once the Committee has some idea about that guidance for its role in decision making, the idea of having a plan for how to implement it, to get a sense of it.
- The need to think about the questions about the model in the way it gets used in context. Going to implementation sooner and get a trial with officers making a decision even if hypothetically at first and seeing what their responses are.

The Chair invited comments from the Committee.

- TO: Additional point is the consideration in the role in the occurrence was a big part that people bought up and how we use that.

TO: The architecture we are using to make the decisions is a Cloud based solution which is currently in development. We are having to spend more time designing the model now. Ideally, we will get an initial model out working better than DASH, but if the tech is not quite right or ready, we do have some time to make the model better before we move to that stage. **A committee member**: Can I suggest you think about part of that. **A committee member**: Is it worth having an officer speak to us about how they have used DASH? **A committee member**: I think the closer we could get to the on the ground stuff the better. **A committee member**: Could we have a few officers use a beta version of the tool against situations that have occurred in the past. Go through the process as though it was real, although we know what the outcome is and then see if there is a different outcome on the long term. **The Chair**: I think that both those suggestions are good. This could be part of the implementation plan that TO thinks about.

The Chair: Good for those questions to keep coming to the group as well. The idea of the summary of questions and answers was good for us to see, do send those questions and we will find a way of sharing with the rest of the group.

TO: Also questions that you have asked today that you would like me to take more time over.

Date of next meeting:
2 February 2022 - 12:00 – 14:30 (TEAMS Meeting)