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- [Home](#)
- Who we are
- What we do
- Where we work
- Get in touch

Resource Centre

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- [Overview](#)
- [Latest news](#)
- [Events](#)
- [Our views](#)
- [Customer Successes](#)
- [Information sheets](#)
- [Videos](#)

[Home](#) > [Resource Centre](#) > [News](#) > Northgate's Custody Image System supports new 'facial recognition' technology

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Northgate's Custody Image System supports new 'facial recognition' technology

Northgate Public Services' Custody Image Management System (CIM) is providing the underlying image database for 'facial recognition' software, which is being pioneered by Leicestershire Police to help track down criminals.

Leicestershire is the first force in the UK to test a new face recognition software system under a six month trial.

NEC has developed NeoFace, which takes images from CCTV, police body cameras, digital cameras or even smartphones and is able to detect and analyse a face, even if the lighting, pose and image resolution is of poor quality, to identify potential suspects in Northgate's Custody Image Management (CIM) system. Leicestershire Police custody images are produced by Northgate's Custody Image Management (CIM) system and over the last five years, CIM has captured over 92,000 images of prisoners brought into custody in the Leicestershire area.

The NeoFace system has been under evaluation in the force since May and around three hundred suspects have already been put through the system, with a high success rate of identification.

The system works by comparing dozens of measurements between key facial features. Leicestershire police have found it impressive because it provides initial results in just a matter of a few seconds. The previous system, although computerised, involved manually searching for possible matches against the 92,000 CIM images, which could take up to several hours.

Leicestershire's Chief Inspector Chris Cockerill said: "We're very proud to be the first UK Police force to evaluate this new system. Initial results have been very promising and we're looking forward to seeing what can be achieved throughout the six month trial."

While the results can't be used as evidence in court, the programme does give detectives significant help in developing new lines of enquiry.

Identity Unit Manager Andy Ramsay said: "Northgate has undoubtedly contributed to the success of the trial as the images of people who have been arrested and held in custody held by the CIM solution are of a high quality and are clearer and sharper than those produced by any other system on the market. The fact that when our CIM database was uploaded onto the NeoFace system, not one of the 92,000 images was rejected, is testament to CIM as an effective custody image system.

"With over ninety-thousand custody images produced by CIM now downloaded onto NEC's NeoFace system, it takes just seconds for NeoFace to compare someone's image against our complete database."

Ian Blackhurst, Northgate’s Executive Director, Solutions, added: “We are delighted to be able to assist Leicestershire Police during this current trial with NEC and also acknowledge the positive comments we have received from end users of our CIM product and the impressive image quality the system produces. We are confident that Northgate will continue to play a role in the development of services and solutions that make a real difference in policing.

“The success of NeoFace during the trial has already created much interest among other forces in respect of Northgate’s CIM product, as forces and specialist end users have acknowledged that database image quality is a key component of any facial recognition system.”

Leicestershire's database is made up of lawfully held images of people who have been arrested.

The results of the trial will be evaluated, once completed, and it could be expanded across the East Midlands with each force's image database available for searches.

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- [Careers](#)
- [Corporate Social Responsibility](#)
- [Northgate Group](#)
- [Awards](#)
- [Community](#)
- [Executive Team](#)
- [Code of Conduct](#)
- [Company History](#)

solutions & services

- [Transformation Services](#)
- [Health Screening Programmes](#)
- [Document Services](#)
- [Service Partnerships](#)
- [Software Solutions](#)
- [Health Registries](#)
- [Business Process Management](#)
- [Business Process Services](#)
- [MICARE](#)
- [Health Information Services](#)

markets

- [Local Government](#)
- [Social Housing](#)
- [Criminal Justice](#)
- [Health](#)
- [Transport](#)
- [Utilities](#)
- [Energy Efficiency](#)
- [Central Government](#)
- [Social Care](#)
- [Fire and Ambulance](#)

what's happening

- [Resource Centre](#)
- [News](#)
- [Events](#)
- [Community](#)
- [Our Views](#)
- [Customer Successes](#)
- [Information Sheets](#)
- [Videos](#)

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- [General Enquiries](#)
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- [Press and PR Enquiries](#)
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