Twenty-Ninth Report of Session 2021-22

Home Office

National Law Enforcement Data Programme (NLEDP)

Introduction from the Committee

The Police National Computer (PNC) is the most important national police information system in the UK. Introduced in 1974, it is the main database for criminal records and is used daily by police officers across the UK's 45 police forces, and by a range of other organisations. The Police National Database (PND), which was introduced in 2011, is a national intelligence-sharing system used across police forces and other bodies such as the National Crime Agency. As these are both national systems, the Department has responsibility for their operation, maintenance, and replacement. In 2014 the Department decided that the existing PNC and PND systems should be replaced by a single, modern cloud-based system which would meet the evolving needs of its users and be more adaptable to future requirements. Consequently, it launched the National Law Enforcement Data Programme in 2016, with the aim of delivering the new system by 2020 at a cost of £671 million.

Based on a report by the National Audit Office, the Committee took evidence on 16 September 2021 from the Home Office. The Committee published its report on 8 December 2021. This is the government's response to the Committee's report. The government will provide a full response and progress update against each of the recommendations in April.

- NAO report: The National Law Enforcement Data Programme – Session 2021-22 (HC 663)
- PAC report: The National Law Enforcement Data Programme – Session 2021-22 (HC 638)

Government response to the Committee

1: PAC Conclusion: After five years, the Department has not delivered any of the expected services to the police through the NLEDS programme, and it is not clear how it can deliver the full capability required by 2025–26.

1: PAC recommendation: The Department must set out a detailed roadmap for the delivery of the full NLEDS capability by 2025–26 and its plans for police forces to transition from the PNC to the new service. This should include clear milestones to which the Department can be held accountable for.

1.1 The government agrees with the Committee's recommendation.

Recommendation implemented

1.2 The Home Office (the department) strongly supports the need for sound planning and to give police forces as much certainty as possible to support the transition away from the Police National Computer (PNC). At the same time, the department needs to be flexible to respond to lessons from the early stages of the programme, changes in the operating environment and the needs of policing.

1.3 As such, the approach the department plans to adopt is to share with forces its key delivery milestones for the programme as a whole alongside a much more detailed annual plan giving the very granular milestones that it is jointly working to over the coming year. This annual plan will be updated each quarter on a rolling basis. This agile and iterative approach builds on Home Office and wider industry good practice and means forces will have early sight of the key milestones for the entirety of the programme and detailed planning milestones a year in advance. An acceptance of this recommendation is on the basis of this approach to planning.

1.4 The programme now submits its full business case on six-monthly cycles to the Home Office Finance Investment Committee (FIC) and undertakes stringent Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) assurance reviews as part of these submissions. IPA assurance reviews assess the current delivery velocity and the long-term achievability of the programme amongst other key aspects.

1.5 The programme will keep the Committee appraised on progress and will provide a further update in April 2022.

2: PAC conclusion: The Department made poor decisions at the outset of the NLEDS programme and, despite signs it was going badly, was slow to make the necessary changes to correct this.

2: PAC recommendation: The Permanent Secretary should ensure that he and other senior staff have sufficient regular oversight of NLEDS from now on, to ensure that he can quickly see problems as they arise and be prepared to take early and decisive action to recover or restructure the programme.

2.1 The government agrees with the Committee's recommendation.

Recommendation implemented

2.2 The National Law Enforcement Data Programme (NLEDP) programme board has been strengthened by the inclusion of the following Home Office senior officials since September 2021:

- Chief Digital, Data and Technology Officer – (started attending the board from January 2022)
- Chief Portfolio Officer
- Non-Exec Director
- Public Safety Group Strategy Director
- Finance Investment Committee critical friend

2.3 The programme board convenes monthly and evaluates the progress against plans and provides steer and support to resolve key issues or impediments.

2.4 The programme has established periodic engagements with the Permanent Secretary to enable accounting officer overview and scrutiny and these will take place every six weeks.

2.5 The Permanent Secretary is also appraised by the IPA on the overall health, delivery confidence and achievability of the programme as part of the six-monthly assurance review cycles.

2.6. A further update on this recommendation will be provided in April 2022.

3: PAC conclusion: Working effectively with the police is critical to the delivery of NLEDS and other technology programmes, but it is not yet clear that the Department's new approach will resolve longstanding challenges in delivering national programmes for local forces.

3: PAC recommendation: The Department needs to carefully monitor its new partnership approach to ensure it enables joint and timely decision-making with the police. The Department should write to the Committee in six months with an update on the new working relationship and whether further changes will be required.

3.1 The government agrees with the Committee's recommendation.

Target implementation date: June 2022

3.2 The department has worked closely with policing and made good progress in embedding the new partnership approach within the NLEDP.

3.3 The revised and simplified Engagement Model allows police to have a strong voice in programme decision making and product prioritisation. Significant progress has already been made and it is already leading to a more informed and collaborative relationship, which is aiding the delivery of LEDS.

3.4 Accountability for the successful delivery of the programme remains with the senior responsible owner (SRO) and ultimately the accounting officer for the Home Office.

3.5 The department will continue to closely monitor and evaluate the progress of embedding this Engagement Model.

- The Product Centricity (PC) transformation Programme in PPPT is in the process of setting up and rolling out a Product Centricity Steering Committee. This will be made up of senior/influential members of both Home Office & Policing and the purpose will be to set strategic direction, review progress and make key decisions. One of the key areas will be reviewing progress and reflecting upon successes and learnings.
- The PC Programme is also devising, and soon to roll out, a Product Maturity Assessment, – this will allow us to compare and contrast the implementation of the Engagement Model, identifying gaps, inconsistencies, and the routes to correcting these.
- The department is also working closely with Policing to create a Product Owner Playbook, this will set standards and define ways of working for all Product Owners in their roles and ensure consistency of approach across all of NLEDP.

3.6 These represent the current thinking and work to monitor and evaluate the embedding of the Engagement Model. More detail will be provided in the April update.

4: PAC conclusion: The police must continue to rely on the PNC for another five years, despite the risks to its availability.

4: PAC recommendation: Alongside its Treasury Minute response, the Department should set out for the Committee how it will guarantee that police will be able to access the PNC service until NLEDS is ready. This should include a full assessment of the risks of continuing to run the PNC and contingency plans for failure. This plan should include a review point at which the decision to replace the PNC's operating system can be taken promptly.

4.1 The government agrees with the Committee's recommendation.

Target implementation date: August 2022

4.2 The Police National Computer (PNC) is a critical national infrastructure, and it is vital that it be constantly available to policing and other users to support law enforcement activities.

4.3 The majority of the hardware and software for PNC will be fully supported through to December 2025. Elements of the software provided by *Software AG* will go out of support at the end of 2024, however with the mitigation activity outlined below this is deemed to be an acceptable element of risk as *Software AG* is a highly stable element of the PNC. Risk mitigation activity includes the department:

- upskilling internal teams and providing appropriate knowledge transfer from Software AG so that it will be able to manage any issues that may occur post December 2024.
- engaging other partners who provide PNC services to ascertain the level of support it can provide post December 2024.
- entering into commercial negotiations with Software AG to determine what levels of support can be made available post December 2024.

4.4 Nonetheless, the department does have a mitigation option to move PNC to a new platform and extend the life of the PNC should this prove necessary as an alternative approach to continuing with NLEDP. The programme is developing these contingency plans in parallel. A detailed assessment of re-platforming the PNC to extend it beyond December 2025 has recently completed and is currently being reviewed. Based on the department's analysis and assessment of findings and recommendations of the assessment, the department will formulate an action plan in Half 1 of 2022 (on or before 30 June 2022), which will determine whether and when to trigger the mitigation option.

4.5 As the PNC re-platforming mitigation option is highly resource intensive and PNC intrusive, it is not possible to deliver both the NLEDP programme and the mitigation option in parallel, nor within the same SR settlement. Should the decision be taken to initiate the mitigation option, it would be necessary to pause the delivery of NLEDP until the PNC re-platforming activities have completed. Current estimates suggest NLEDP would be postponed for a further 2 to 3-year period. If the mitigation option is initiated, it is expected that the current SR settlement would be sufficient to cover the delivery of either re-platforming or NLEDP, but not both.

4.6 As an added complexity, in the event of initiating the mitigation option, doing so would change the current NLEDP delivery approach and so there's no guarantee that work performed to date on NLEDP could be fully reused once PNC has been re platformed. This would likely therefore lead to a significant delay in delivering NLEDP and a significant increase in longer term delivery costs.

4.7 The department will provide a further progress update in April 2022.

5: PAC conclusion: The Department does not yet have a plan for maintaining the PND and combining its data with NLEDS in future.

5: PAC recommendation: The Department should write to the Committee when it has an approved business case for the PND setting out its plan, milestones and budget for expanding the use of the PND and ensuring police will be able to access PND data via NLEDS.

5.1 The government agrees with the Committee's recommendation.

Target implementation date: April 2022

5.2 The Police National Database (PND) business case is currently being reviewed and refined by key stakeholders. The next steps on this business case are:

- January 2022: Business Case approach was placed before a special meeting of the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) Intelligence Portfolio on 12 January and secured

NPCC endorsement for programme approach. Business case secured support of PND Programme Board on 19 January.

- February 2022: Business case secured approval of Commercial Advisory Board (CAB) on 9th Feb, Business Design Authority on 9 February, and Technical Design Authority on 10 February.
- March 2022: Business Case will go before the Home Office Finance Investment Committee (FIC) 10 March for final approval.

5.3 This business case envisages that PND will progress to its target transformational state through evolving the current capability, rather than replacement from scratch. It will transform via an interim state that addresses technical debt, replaces the underlying database, and moves to Cloud. This is deemed to be the most cost-effective solution, whilst balancing risk and time to deliver. This approach will ensure continuous availability for the police, ongoing delivery of enhanced PND capabilities including integration with NLEDP, technology debt is addressed whilst also future proofing the PND service.

5.4 This interim state will include improved Serious and Organised Crime analytics, increase the number of users from 12,000 to 20,000, and share information with National Firearms Licencing system.

5.5 This business case envisages that PND in the target state will be able to support federated searches within LEDS, providing police officers with the single system to access both services.

5.6 The PND programme will provide an update to the Committee in April on its high-level plans, key milestones, and budget once its business case is approved by the Home Office Financial Investment Committee (FIC) in March 2022. For financial year 2022-23 a further £6.5 million has been allocated to transform and sustain the PND.

6: PAC conclusion: There is a risk that the Department still lacks the capacity to prioritise and deliver major digital programmes on time.

6: PAC recommendation: The Department must be realistic about how long it will take to deliver major programmes, given the skills and capabilities and funding available. It should require all SROs of major programmes to report annually on how they will manage any gaps between the skills and capabilities required to deliver and those available in their programmes. The Department should write to us in six months' time with an update on how this is being implemented.

6.1 The government agrees with the Committee's recommendation.

Target implementation date: June 2022

6.2 The Home Office Portfolio and Project Delivery Directorate already work with all major programmes to assess the level of capability required to deliver and receive regular reports on project progress, risks, and vacancies.

6.3 These reports form the basis of risk-based discussions at the Portfolio Delivery Board which is attended by both the IPA and a non-executive director.

6.4 To strengthen its existing approach, the department is commissioning and assuring longer term strategic workforce plans for all Government Major Projects Portfolio (GMPP) programmes that set out the required skills and capabilities to deliver these programmes, how these will be filled and how any gaps will be managed.

6.5 The department is also strengthening its project entry criteria so that new projects will not be able to commence without evidence that they have the right resources in place to deliver the next stage of the project.

6.6 The department will provide a further update in April 2022.