



Home Office

BIOMETRICS AND FORENSICS ETHICS GROUP MEMBERS

Recruitment Information Pack

August 2023



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Welcome Note from Professor Mark Watson-Gandy, Biometrics and Forensics Ethics Group, Chair



Dear Applicant,

Thank you for your interest in applying to join the BFEG – the Biometrics and Forensics Ethics Group.

The BFEG is a non-departmental public body that advises the UK government on ethical issues regarding collection, use, and retention of biometric and forensic material and the use of large and complex data sets.

Our story starts in 2008 as the National DNA Database Ethics Group (NDNAD EG). The group was established to provide ministers with independent ethical advice on the operation of the UK National DNA Database (NDNAD), now one of the world's longest established and largest DNA databases.

The Group's role evolved and expanded and, in 2017, the Home Office took the decision to extend the remit of the NDNAD EG to cover all forensic identification techniques including, facial recognition technology and fingerprinting. Our change of name to the Biometrics and Forensics Ethics Group reflected this new and wider role.

The remit of the BFEG was further extended on 12 February 2019 to provide independent ethical review of the use of large data sets by the Home Office. This move built on the BFEG's expertise and experience and the Group now also advise on ethical issues concerning the use of complex datasets and on projects involving explainable data-driven technology and artificial intelligence.

As a member of BFEG you will be working with some of the UK's leading experts, deliberately drawn from the widest range of disciplines to ensure we provide the best, sound, dispassionate, evidence-based advice.

The BFEG is called on to advise on some of the most challenging and gritty ethical dilemmas today. Recent work has ranged from the use of genetic genealogy as a crime detection tool, public-private collaboration in the use of live facial recognition and refreshing our overarching ethical principles.

The vast majority of BFEG's work is commissioned by the Home Office, our sponsor government department, however the BFEG also provides advice in support of the Forensic Information Databases Strategy Board and the Biometrics and Surveillance Camera Commissioner. The BFEG is also able to self-commission work.

Always challenging, always changing, the BFEG's work is exciting and intellectually rewarding. I do hope you will apply and join our amazing team.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Watson-Gandy". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style. Below the signature is a short horizontal line.

Professor Mark Watson-Gandy, BFEG Chair

About the Biometrics and Forensics Ethics Group

The [Biometrics and Forensics Ethics Group](#) (BFEG) is sponsored by the Home Office to provide independent ethical advice on issues related to the collection, use, and retention of biometric and forensic material. The BFEG also advises on ethical issues in the use of large and complex data sets and projects using artificial intelligence for decision making.

Members of the Group are appointed based on their skills and expertise and do not represent their employer or other interest group. The Group has [members](#) with a broad range of skills and expertise such as; law, computer science, philosophy, ethics, and forensic science. Members are expected to provide independent advice and act in the public interest at all times.

The BFEG holds four full committee meetings a year and the [minutes of these meetings](#) are publicly available on the BFEG website together with the Group's annual reports. Around 70% of the BFEG's work is commissioned by the Home Office, the most recent [commission](#) was in May 2022. Recent priorities of the group have been biometric technologies, such as facial recognition, and ethical considerations in the adoption of artificial intelligence.

To best utilise resources, the majority of the BFEG's work is carried out by working groups, which report into quarterly meetings of the BFEG. The BFEG is supported by the Home Office Science Secretariat. The working groups meet as needed and are organised around the following themes:

Biometric Recognition Technology

- Advises on ethical approaches to the collection, use, retention and deletion of extracted digital forensic material.

Artificial Intelligence

- Advises on projects considering the adoption or use of explainable artificial intelligence solutions.

Data Ethics Advisory Group

- Provides ethical guidance and support for Home Office data science projects, such as proof of concept trials.

Complex Datasets

- Advises on specific projects considering the use machine learning.

Home Office Biometrics Programme Ethics

- Provides ethical guidance for projects within the Home Office Biometrics programme, a programme of services to support fingerprint, DNA and facial image capabilities.

The BFEG has recently published the following work:

- [Biometrics and Forensics Ethics Group ethical principles](#), updated in March 2023
- [Briefing note on the ethical issues arising from public-private collaboration in the use of live facial recognition technology](#), published in January 2021
- [Should we be making use of genetic genealogy to assist in solving crime? A report on the feasibility of such methods in the UK](#), published in September 2020

Role Description

Job Title: Biometrics and Forensics Ethics Group Members

Time Commitment: The expected time commitment of the role is 15 days per annum (approximately)

Roles Available: Six

Remuneration: The role is unremunerated, but the Home Office will reimburse all reasonable expenses incurred in respect of Committee business

Appointment: Three year fixed term appointment with the possibility of extension or reappointment; subject to review

Location: Central London/Remote Working

Reporting to: Home Secretary (via the Chair)

Purpose:

The Biometrics and Forensic Ethics Group (BFEG) considers the ethical impact on society, groups, and individuals from:

- the use of large datasets, including the implementation of systems using machine learning and artificial intelligence.
- the collection, retention and use of human biometric identifiers, such as DNA, fingerprints, and facial images.
- the collection, retention and use of forensic data such as digital forensic material.

Responsibilities

Knowledge and Experience

Applicants should demonstrate expertise in one or more of the following areas:

- The law, with experience in relevant areas such as; criminal law, forensic science, biometrics, and data.
- Social sciences, with experience of considering the social and ethical implications of technological innovations, such as in forensics, biometrics or use of data.
- Data ethics, with experience of considering the issues in the use of large data sets across the biometric, forensic and criminal justice arena or other relevant fields. Experience in considering the application of data within industry, enforcement or medicine is desirable.
- Artificial intelligence, with experience of considering the regulation of or ethical application of artificial intelligence tools/systems.

- Biometrics, with experience of considering the ethical use of biometric systems on society.
- Medical ethics, experience of review or evaluation of ethics in regard to medical decision making.

Person Specification

It is essential in your supporting statement that you provide evidence and proven examples against each of the selection criteria in **Part One only** of the person specification, in so far as you are able. These responses will be further developed and explored with those candidates invited for interview, together with the criteria listed in **Part Two**.

Part One – Essential Criteria

Essential skills

- An excellent understanding of ethics and the role of an ethics committee;
- Experience of interpreting rules and regulations and identifying options or recommendations;
- The ability to analyse complex information from diverse sources;
- Good communication skills, both written and oral, including the ability to actively and constructively contribute to discussions and to work well as part of a team;
- An appreciation of equality and diversity and a willingness to champion difference and challenge unacceptable practices, and;
- An understanding of the potential ethical implications on society of issues within the BFEG's remit, such as forensics, biometrics or use of data.

Desirable

- A good understanding of the specific ethical issues addressed by the BFEG, such as the collection, use, storage and retention of biometric and forensic information and the use of complex data sets; and
- Evidence of working successfully on committees or other decision-making groups and reaching impactful and timely conclusions.

As a public appointee you will be expected to follow the [Seven Principles of Public Life](#), as set out by the Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life.

Due Diligence: Please note that as part of the recruitment process, due diligence, including social media checks will be undertaken on the appointable candidates.

Response Instructions

The closing date for applications is 23:00, 11 September 2023.

Please submit the following 2 documents, clearly labelled. In order to apply, you will need to click on one of the links below, depending on if you have already set up an account on the new Cabinet Office Public Appointment website.

<https://apply-for-public-appointment.service.gov.uk/create-account>

<https://apply-for-public-appointment.service.gov.uk/auth/sign-in>

1. A concise CV (maximum two sides A4, minimum 11 font) setting out your career history and including details of any professional qualifications.

2. A short supporting statement (maximum two sides A4, minimum 11 font) giving evidence of the strength and depth of your ability to meet the essential criteria for the role. Please provide specific examples to demonstrate how you meet each of the experience, qualities and skill areas identified in the person specification.

Please submit your application documents as 2 separate attachments and note that short-listed candidates will also be required to complete and return a separate form in relation to referees and nationality information.

Please note the following:

- We cannot accept applications submitted after the closing date.
- Applications will be assessed solely on the documentation provided. Please refer to the advert and checklist to ensure you have provided the necessary documentation.
- Applications will be acknowledged upon receipt.
- Feedback will only be given to unsuccessful candidates following interview.

Further Information

If you have any queries about this role, please contact: bfeg@homeoffice.gov.uk,

If you have any queries about the recruitment process for this role, please contact: publicappointments@homeoffice.gov.uk

If helpful to you, there is guidance available on writing a supporting statement on the public appointments webpages: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/public-appointments>

Indicative Timetable

Please note that these dates are only indicative at this stage and could be subject to change.

Closing Date	23:00, 11 September 2023
Short-list Meeting	Expected w/c 25 September
Candidate Interviews	Expected w/c 23 October
Meeting with Minister (if required)	Expected post interview

Selection Process

This role is being competed in accordance with the Cabinet Office’s Governance Code on Public Appointments (December 2016)¹, which sets out the regulatory framework for public appointments processes. The Code is based on three core principles – merit, openness and fairness.

An Advisory Assessment Panel (Panel) will sift applications, assessing each application against the essential criteria, to produce a shortlist. Subject to Ministerial agreement, they will then conduct interviews to ascertain which candidates are appointable to the role.

The panel for the Member recruitment will be chaired by Mark Watson-Gandy (BFEG Chair), and comprise of Alex MacDonald (Home Office Data & Identity Deputy Director and BFEG policy sponsor) and Colleen Harris MVO DL, as the independent member.

The Home Office Public Appointments Team will acknowledge your application and keep you updated on the progress of the competition. At the short-listing meeting, the selection panel will assess each application against the essential criteria and decide whom to invite for final interview. Further details about the format will be provided to you in advance.

We encourage a diverse workforce and welcome applications from all suitably qualified people. This role is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

Please note: Expenses incurred by candidates during the recruitment process will not be reimbursed except in exceptional circumstances and only when agreed in advance with the Home Office Public Appointments Team.

Terms of Appointment

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https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/578498/governance_code_on_public_appointments_16_12_2016.pdf

Nature of Appointment: You are not an employee of the Home Office or the Biometrics and Forensics Ethics Group. Accordingly, nothing in this document shall be construed as, or taken to create, a contract of employment between you and the Department or Her Majesty's Government.

Appointment Term: Your appointment as a Biometrics and Forensics Ethics Group member will be made by the Home Secretary. The appointment will be for a period of three years. Re-appointments can be made at the end of the period of office at the discretion of Ministers, subject to a satisfactory appraisal of performance and mutual agreement. It should be noted that this post is a public appointment; appointments may be terminated prior to the conclusion of the period of appointment.

Remuneration and Time Commitment:

- The role is unremunerated, but the Home Office will reimburse all reasonable expenses incurred in respect of BFEG business.
- The expected time commitment is 15 days per annum.

Location: Central London/ Remote Working

Security clearance: The successful candidates will be required to have or be willing to obtain security clearance to Security Check (SC) level. It usually takes between 4-5 weeks to obtain the security clearance. The role will be offered on a conditional basis until the successful candidate has passed all checks. The successful candidate will be encouraged to take up this appointment as soon as possible, subject to the successful completion of all pre-appointment checks.

Confidentiality: You will be subject to the provisions of the Official Secrets Act and required to exercise care in the use of official information acquired in the course of official duties, and not to disclose information which is held in confidence.

Disqualification for appointment: There are circumstances in which an individual will not be considered for appointment. They include:

- people who have received a prison sentence or suspended sentence of three months or more in the last five years;
- people who are the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order;
- in certain circumstances, those who have had an earlier term of appointment terminated;
- anyone who is under a disqualification order under the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986, or Part 2 of the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 1989;
- anyone who has failed to make a payment under a county court administration order;
- anyone subject to an order under the Insolvency Act 1986; and
- anyone who has been removed from trusteeship of a charity.

Further advice about disqualification for appointment can be given by contacting the Public Appointments Team on publicappointments@homeoffice.gov.uk.

Standards in public life: You will be expected to demonstrate high standards of corporate and personal conduct. Candidates will be expected to abide by the "Seven Principles of Public Life" set out by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (see below, page 12). Failure to do so may result in sanction up to and including dismissal.

Registration of interests: The purpose of these provisions is to avoid any danger of a public appointee being influenced, or appearing to be influenced, by their private interests in the exercise of their public duties.

Public appointments require the highest standards of propriety, involving impartiality, integrity and objectivity, in relation to the stewardship of public funds and the oversight and management of all related activities. This means that any private, voluntary, charitable, or political interest which might be material and relevant to the work of the body concerned should be declared. It is important, therefore, that you consider your circumstances when applying for a public appointment and identify any potential conflicts of interest, whether real or perceived.

There is a requirement to declare any actual or potential conflict of interest you may have in being appointed to the role in a separate form. Any actual or perceived conflicts of interest will be fully explored by the Panel at interview stage.

Political Activity: Members will need to show political impartiality during their time on the Board and must declare significant party political activity they undertake in the period of their appointment. Details of the successful candidate's declared political activity must be published by appointing departments when the appointments are publicised.

The Political Activity Declaration will be kept separate from your application and will only be seen by the Panel prior to interview – the Panel may at that stage explore with candidates any potential for conflict of interest. It is appreciated that political activities may have given you relevant skills, including experience gained from committee work, collective decision making, resolving conflict and public speaking. If, therefore, you have had such experience and you consider it relevant to your application for this post, you may if you choose include it separately in the main body of your application.

Equal Opportunities Monitoring: The Home Office is committed to providing equal opportunities for all, irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

As part of the application process we ask candidates to complete equal opportunities monitoring information. This will help us to monitor selection decisions to assess whether equality of opportunity is being achieved. The information on the form will be treated as confidential, and used for statistical purposes only. The form will not be treated as part of your application.

Disability Confident: The Home Office is an accredited user of the government's "Disability Confident" disability symbol, which denotes organisations which have a positive attitude towards disabled applicants. Applicants who meet the minimum criteria in the job specification are guaranteed an interview (GIS). Selection will be on merit. If you wish to apply for consideration under this scheme, please complete the form in Annex B. It is not necessary to state the nature of your disability.

Whether you choose to apply under the GIS or not you can still ask us to make particular arrangements for you when attending an interview. You can also contact us if you want to discuss the criteria for the role or have questions regarding your application.

Centre for Public Appointments Database: As set out in Annex B, if you consent, we will retain your CV and contact details for the purposes of alerting you to any opportunities that may arise in future. We will also share your CV and contact details with the Centre for Public Appointments in the Cabinet Office who may use it for this purpose. They may also share it with other Government Departments so that they can contact you about such opportunities. You may withdraw your consent to your information being processed for this purpose at any time by contacting dpo@homeoffice.gov.uk.

Complaints: If you are not completely satisfied with the way your application is handled at any stage of the competition, please raise any complaint in the first instance with the Public Appointments Team at: publicappointments@homeoffice.gov.uk.

We will reply to your complaint within 20 days. If, after receiving our response you are still not satisfied, you may contact the Commissioner for Public Appointments:

The Commissioner for Public Appointments Room G/8, Ground Floor 1 Horse Guards Road
London SW1A 2HQ. Tel: 0207 271 0849.

ANNEX A – THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC LIFE

The principles of public life apply to anyone who works as a public office-holder. This includes all those who are elected or appointed to public office, nationally and locally, and all people appointed to work in the civil service, local government, the police, courts and probation services, NDPBs, and in the health, education, social and care services. All public office-holders are both servants of the public and stewards of public resources. The principles also have application to all those in other sectors delivering public services.

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the public interest clearly demands.

Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.