



ISSUE 01 · SPRING 2026

# ***BDG Investigator's Bulletin***

***Insight · Guidance · Best Practice***

Welcome to the first edition of our new *Investigator's Bulletin*, supporting CPD for Public sector investigation professionals. In this issue we look at four areas shaping the way investigators work right now: the rise of AI tools and what IPCO's new oversight policy means for RIPA applications; the implications of the Fisher Review for disclosure practice; best practice in capturing, storing, and managing digital evidence; and the national standards governing ABE interviews with vulnerable witnesses. We hope you find it useful — and we look forward to bringing you future editions.

*The BDG Training Team*

# AI in your toolkit: opportunity, obligation and oversight

From Copilot in your inbox to AI-assisted RIPA applications, artificial intelligence is already embedded in investigation work. The duty now is to use it responsibly and to understand who is watching.

Microsoft 365 Copilot is integrated directly into Word, Outlook, Teams and OneNote. It is now accessible across many Public and Local authorities. For investigators, this opens genuine opportunities: summarising lengthy statements and interview transcripts, producing structured first drafts of investigation reports and referral letters, creating case file indexes, generating correspondence, and producing meeting action logs from Teams recordings. In Excel, Copilot can help identify patterns and anomalies in financial data, useful in trading standards and fraud-related investigations.

But with capability comes responsibility. **Three rules govern every investigator's use of AI tools.**

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<p><b>You are the author, Copilot is the drafter</b></p> <p>Every AI-assisted document must be reviewed and approved by the named investigator. AI can hallucinate — producing plausible but factually incorrect content. Verify every fact, date, and reference against source material before use in any formal document.</p>	<p><b>Stay within your approved environment</b></p> <p>Never paste case material, witness details, or suspect information into public-facing AI tools such as free ChatGPT or Gemini. Only use Copilot within your authority's configured Microsoft 365 tenancy. Anything else is could be a data protection breach.</p>	<p><b>Document your use of AI</b></p> <p>Keep a clear record of where and how AI tools were used in preparing any case material. This is not optional, it is a professional and, in some contexts, a legal requirement.</p>

## IPCO: AI and RIPA Applications — What Investigators Must Know

In March 2025, the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO) published its Scope of Interest in AI policy. IPCO is principally interested in how AI may increase the number of subjects investigated by public authorities and how it may change the depth of intrusion into privacy rights. Critically for local authority investigators: **IPCO's scope expressly includes commodity IT — such as Microsoft 365 — where AI features are embedded in commonly used software.** If AI is used to make, enhance, or contribute to a RIPA application (directed or intrusive surveillance, CHIS authorisations, or communications data requests), this falls within IPCO's oversight.

- ☐ The practical implication is clear: if AI tools — including Copilot — are used at any stage of preparing or supporting a RIPA or IPA application, this should be declared and documented within the application itself. **IPCO inspectors will ask. Be ahead of it.**

### Action Points

- Check whether your authority has a policy on AI use in investigations
- Do not use public AI tools for case material
- Ensure any use of Copilot or equivalent in RIPA-related work is documented and declared in the application
- Verify all AI-generated content before use in formal documents

# Disclosure in the Digital Age: what local authority investigators need to know

The Fisher Review is the most significant examination of the disclosure regime since the CPIA came into force in 1996. Its findings apply directly to every local authority investigator.

Published in March 2025, Jonathan Fisher KC's Independent Review of Disclosure covers 45 recommendations aimed at modernising the criminal disclosure regime. The review's findings are not confined to serious fraud or Crown Court cases — they reach every investigator bound by the CPIA. **Some key considerations raised in that review:**

## 1. Digital material

Body cams, phone downloads, CCTV, email, and social media now appear in routine cases. Have a documented plan for managing digital material from the outset of every investigation.

## 2. Scheduling

The review supports metadata-based scheduling for high-volume digital cases, reducing manual item-by-item descriptions. Review your case management processes now.

## 3. Prosecutor engagement

Fisher KC recommended pre-charge discussion with your prosecutor on every case to agree the disclosure approach and reasonable lines of inquiry before charge.

## 4. Training standards

The review calls for national disclosure learning standards and a Senior Disclosure Officer accreditation pathway. Audit your team's current training.

## 5. Redaction

Investigators are carrying out significantly more pre-charge redaction than is legally required. Revisit your practice — guidance from the Home Office is expected in 2026.

## 6. Technology & AI

The CPIA Code of Practice is expected to be updated to permit technology to discharge disclosure duties. Begin reviewing what tools your authority currently uses.

## Action Points

- Review disclosure policy and scheduling
- Establish pre-charge prosecutor engagement as standard
- Audit disclosure training
- Revisit redaction practice
- Monitor government response to the Fisher Review

# Achieving Best Evidence: are your interview standards fit for purpose?

ABE interviews are some of the most legally scrutinised work any investigator undertakes.

The Achieving Best Evidence in Criminal Proceedings guidance — updated in 2022 — sets the national standard for interviewing vulnerable and intimidated witnesses across all agencies. For local authority investigators, compliance with ABE is not optional: it governs how evidence from children, people with disabilities, and trauma-affected individuals is gathered, preserved, and presented to a court.

**Failure to follow ABE principles does not just risk evidence being challenged — it risks re-traumatising witnesses and undermining prosecutions that may have taken months of investigative work to build. A lack of Training and updated CPD is an issue across the public sector, if you are involved in ABE, we are putting on a one day workshop to enhance CPD around the following topic areas:**



## Legal framework

Understand ABE 2022 guidance, underpinning legislation, national reviews, and multi-agency safeguarding frameworks.



## Vulnerable witnesses

Recognise the specific needs of children, people with disabilities, and trauma-affected individuals — and how these affect interview planning.



## Interview skills

Plan and conduct ABE-compliant interviews. Avoid leading and suggestive questions. Understand the phases of the ABE interview structure.



## Special measures

Apply intermediaries, ground rules hearings, and special measures to support vulnerable witnesses before and during proceedings.



## Trauma & memory

Understand how trauma, memory, and cognitive development affect the reliability of evidence and how to adapt your approach accordingly.



## Defensible documentation

Produce accurate, legally defensible written records and interview documentation that will withstand scrutiny at court.

## Achieving Best Evidence: One-Day CPD Event

A practice-focused, one-day CPD programme for safeguarding and criminal justice professionals. Grounded in current national guidance — from legal frameworks to trauma-informed interviewing.

### Who is it for?

Local authority investigators, social workers, healthcare professionals, police officers, and anyone conducting or contributing to ABE interviews.

### Includes

- Full-day facilitated training
- CPD certificate
- Refreshments and lunch
- Access to BDG Private Members Area

### Venue

Birmingham City Centre — direct access from Birmingham New Street station.

### Date

Tuesday 12th May 2026

9:30am – 4:30pm (registration from 9:00am).

### Cost

£199 per person (exc. VAT)

### Group & in-house bookings

Group and in-house bookings available.

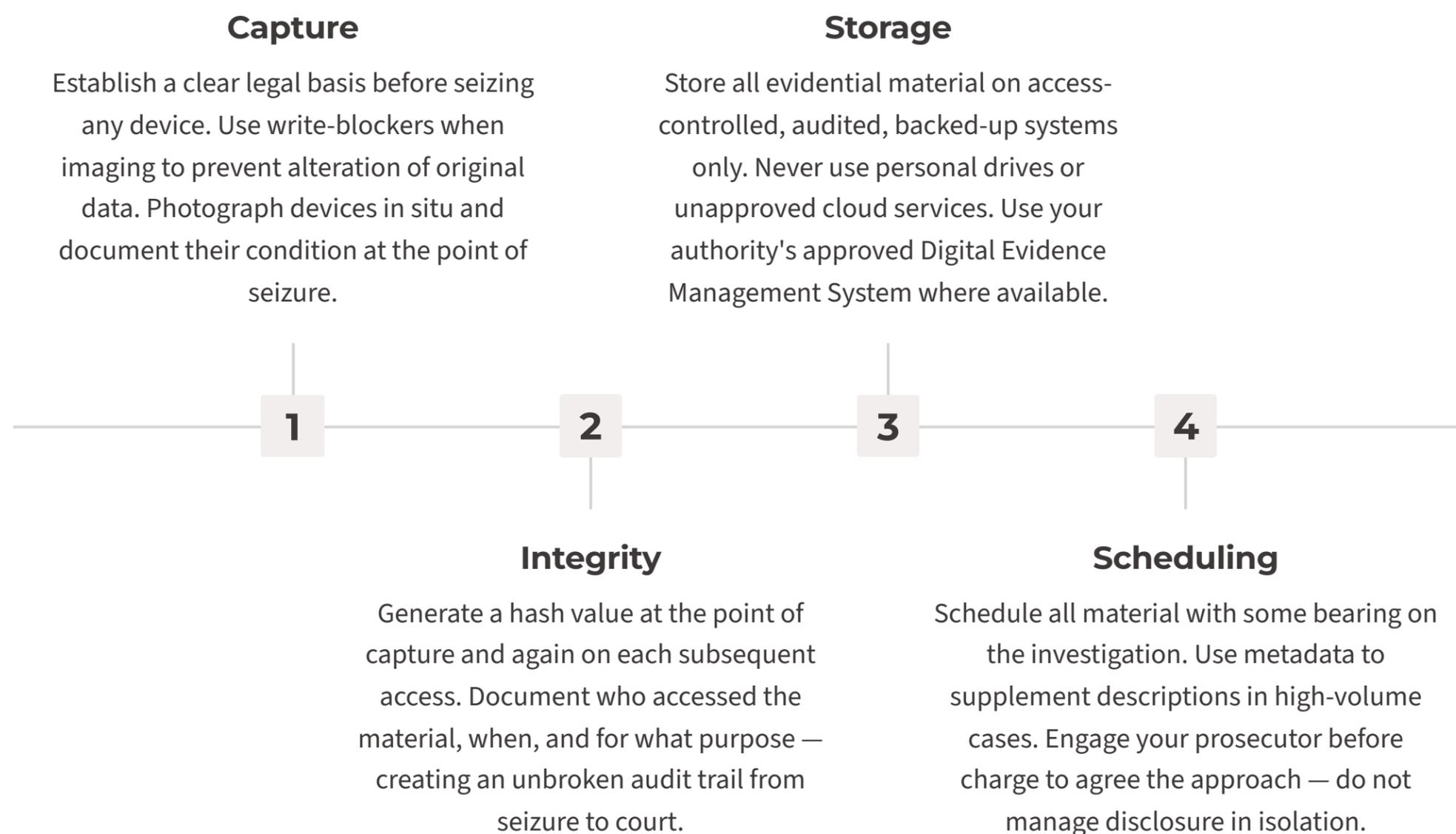
### Book your place

Places are strictly limited. To enquire or book: email [info@bdgtrainingconsultancy.co.uk](mailto:info@bdgtrainingconsultancy.co.uk) or contact us directly. **Early booking strongly advised.**

# Capture, store, manage: getting digital evidence right

Failing to handle digital evidence correctly can render it inadmissible, expose your investigation to legal challenge, or collapse a prosecution entirely. Here is the framework.

Digital material features in virtually every investigation conducted by a local authority. The legal and procedural standards governing how that material is captured, stored, and managed are not optional guidance — **they are the foundation of evidential integrity.**



## Minimum Storage Standards

- Access restricted to named individuals on a need-to-know basis
- All access logged automatically
- Evidential and working copies held separately
- Retained per your authority's schedule and CPIA obligations
- Backup verified regularly

## Social Media Evidence — A Word of Caution

Screenshots alone are generally insufficient as evidence. Capture the full URL, page title, timestamp, and any available metadata at the point of preservation. For platforms that may remove content, consider whether a specialist tool or the platform's own legal process is needed to preserve evidential integrity. **If in doubt, seek advice before proceeding.**

# Investigations Training with BDG

BDG Training Consultancy delivers specialist investigation training to local authorities, public bodies, and law enforcement across the UK. Our programmes are grounded in current legislation and delivered by subject matter experts.

## In-House Training for Your Team

All of the following programmes are available for in-house delivery, tailored to your organisation's legislation, case types, and operational context.



### Initial Investigation and Decision Making

Start investigations well with triage, planning, evidence capture, and proportionate decision-making.



### Statements, Exhibits and Digital Evidence

Build case files with clear statements, labelled exhibits, and sound handling of digital material.



### Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE)

Understand PACE powers, safeguards, and the rules that govern lawful detention and evidence.



### PACE Interviews (PEACE Investigative Interviews)

Plan and conduct fair, structured interviews using the PEACE model and lawful interviewing practice.



### RIPA and Investigatory Powers Awareness

Learn the basics of covert powers, authorisation, oversight, and compliance responsibilities.



### Disclosure (CPIA) 1996 – Bronze (Awareness)

Cover the core disclosure duties, schedules, redaction, and working effectively with prosecutors.



### Court Skills / Witness Familiarisation

Prepare staff for giving evidence confidently and understanding the court process.



### Organised Crime Group Management (OCGs)

Assess, manage, and disrupt organised crime groups using a structured investigative approach.



### Intelligence Handling and Development

Record, grade, analyse, and develop intelligence into actionable investigative opportunities.



### Open Source Intelligence Research (OSINT)

Find and assess publicly available information safely, ethically, and effectively.



### Managing Risk and Decision Making

Recognise risk, apply professional judgement, and make defensible decisions under pressure.



### Personal Online Security and Anti Surveillance

Strengthen digital safety, reduce exposure, and protect staff from online monitoring.

## Find out more and book your place

Visit our investigations training page: [bdgtraining.co.uk/investigations](https://bdgtraining.co.uk/investigations)

Group bookings and in-house enquiries: contact us via the website or email our team directly. Places on open events are strictly limited — **early booking advised.**