



C O M P U T E R F O R E N S I C S L A B

London digital forensics & e-discovery · Established 2007

Understanding and Controlling eDisclosure Costs

The Multiplication Chain, and How to Break It

eDisclosure bills are not mysterious; they are arithmetic. Gigabytes collected become larger gigabytes processed, which become gigabytes hosted every month for the life of the matter, which become documents reviewed at a price per document that dwarfs everything upstream. Every unnecessary gigabyte collected multiplies through every later stage, which is why "collect everything to be safe" is the most expensive sentence in litigation. This guide explains each cost component in plain terms (collection, processing and expansion, hosting, the review population and reviewer economics), works the multiplication chain numerically, and sets out the ten control levers that keep disclosure spend proportionate and predictable.

⌚ Estimated reading time: 30 min read

§ ABOUT THE AUTHOR

PREPARED BY COMPUTER FORENSICS LAB E-DISCOVERY TEAM

Computer Forensics Lab is a London-based digital forensics and electronic disclosure practice established in 2007. Its eDiscovery arm, **e-discovery.uk**, is built around the economics this guide explains: "Review is where budgets are spent. Processing is where budgets are made." The practice culls aggressively before data reaches review so clients pay for substance, not volume, quotes in itemised scenarios rather than round numbers, and has reduced review populations by as much as 71 per cent through negotiated, hit-tested terms. The laboratory side prices the difficult sources honestly, in both directions, with feasibility statements that survive scrutiny.

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ISO 17025-ALIGNED PROCEDURES

ISO 27001-ALIGNED SECURITY

ACPO / NPCC DIGITAL EVIDENCE PRINCIPLES

EARLY CASE & DATA ASSESSMENT

ITEMISED SCENARIO PRICING

FULL CHAIN-OF-CUSTODY DOCUMENTATION

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Executive summary

THE HEADLINE POINT: COSTS ARE A MULTIPLICATION CHAIN, AND COLLECTION IS ITS FIRST TERM

Every eDisclosure bill is the product of one chain: gigabytes collected, multiplied by an expansion factor at processing (compressed containers and mailboxes typically grow 1.5 to 3 times when unpacked), hosted at a monthly rate for the entire life of the matter (commonly eighteen months to two and a half years), and finally converted into a review population priced per document at rates that make review 60 to 80 per cent of the total. Because each stage multiplies the last, an unnecessary gigabyte collected is not one cost but four, recurring monthly in the middle and exploding at the end: the single most reliable way to control disclosure spend is therefore to shrink the chain's first term and cull hard at its second. "Collect everything to be safe" is safety theatre: it is the decision that creates the shocking bill, and (because over-collection also means over-processing of personal data) it is a data-protection liability as well. The prepared litigator prices the chain per scenario before committing, pulls the ten control levers of §7 deliberately, and reads provider quotes for the traps of §9.

- **Review dominates; upstream decides.** The per-document review cost dwarfs every other unit rate, but the number of documents that reach review is decided upstream, at collection scoping and processing culls: budgets are spent in review and made in processing.
- **Hosting is the sleeper.** A per-gigabyte monthly rate looks trivial on day one and compounds for the matter's life; data promoted thoughtlessly and never released quietly accrues five figures on long matters.
- **Expansion is budgeted or it ambushes.** Quotes and budgets built on collected volume without an expansion assumption understate processing and hosting by half or more; ask every provider what expansion factor their figures assume.
- **Costs are a case document.** The disclosure phase of Precedent H, provider scenario quotes and burn reports are litigation instruments: they win proportionality arguments, discipline opponents' demands, and price settlement; the measured party controls the money conversation.
- **Control is a system, not a haggle.** Unit-rate discounts move totals by single-digit percentages; the levers that move them by multiples are scoping, culling, staging, TAR and hosting hygiene, which is why the guide spends its pages there.

The problem in plain English: why disclosure bills shock

Disclosure bills shock because the expensive decisions look free when they are made. Nobody sees a cost when a collection scope says "take everything, we can filter later": the imaging is a modest line item, and the meter it starts is invisible. The gigabytes then expand in processing (a cost), sit in hosting month after month (a cost, recurring), and finally arrive at review, where each document costs more to read than every upstream stage cost to handle it, multiplied across hundreds of thousands of documents nobody decided to need. The bill arrives as a review invoice, so review gets the blame; the cause was the sentence spoken at collection.

Three habits of mind prevent the shock. **Price the chain, not the stage:** every scoping decision is evaluated at its full downstream cost (collection plus expansion plus hosting-for-life plus review), which is a five-minute arithmetic exercise once the unit rates are known. **Treat volume as liability:** data is not an asset in litigation; every gigabyte is a recurring charge and a review risk, and UK GDPR minimisation points the same way, so the defensible posture and the cheap posture coincide. **Decide with samples, commit with evidence:** the early-assessment method of this series exists precisely so scoping decisions are made on measured richness and overlap instead of fear, which is what makes the narrow scope defensible as well as affordable.

§ 0 3 · THE BILL

The anatomy of the bill: six cost stages

STAGE	HOW IT IS PRICED	WHAT DRIVES IT, AND WHAT TO WATCH
Collection	Per device, per custodian-source or per engineer-day; forensic imaging premium over targeted export	Scope: number of sources and the method chosen. Full forensic images cost more and collect operating-system noise that inflates everything downstream; targeted, documented collection is usually the proportionate default, with imaging reserved for forensic triggers
Processing	Per gigabyte, on <i>expanded</i> volume	Collected volume times the expansion factor (\$4). Includes extraction, text and metadata indexing, deNISTing, hash deduplication and search preparation; the stage where culling levers live, and the cheapest place a document will ever be handled
Hosting	Per gigabyte per month, on the volume promoted to the review platform, plus per-user licences	Volume promoted times matter duration. The compounding sleeper: 18 to 30 months is normal, and data parked in the workspace "just in case" is billed every one of them. Watch promote-everything workflows and quotes that assume short matters
Review	Per document effectively: reviewer rate divided by pace; second-pass and privilege QC layered on top	The dominant stage: commonly 60 to 80 per cent of total spend. Driven entirely by the review population, which every upstream decision either inflated or culled; reviewer seniority mix and workflow design set the unit economics (\$6)
Production	Per document or per gigabyte for imaging, endorsement, load files and exchange	Comparatively small; driven by format choices and redaction volume, which is manual and priced accordingly
Project management	Hourly or a percentage of the technical spend	Real and necessary (defensibility documentation lives here); watch only for duplication between provider PM and law-firm supervision of the same tasks

Expansion: why one gigabyte becomes two and a half

- **What expands:** mailbox files (PST and OST) and archives (ZIP, RAR, 7z) are compressed containers that unpack to a multiple of their stored size; emails explode into messages plus attachments, each now a document; embedded objects (spreadsheets inside decks inside emails) are extracted as items; and OCR of image-only files adds a text layer that must itself be stored and indexed.
- **Typical factors:** 1.5x to 3x overall is the working range, with mailbox-heavy collections at the top of it; a 100 GB collection routinely becomes 180 to 250 GB of processed, hosted volume. Providers know their averages by data type: ask.
- **Why it matters twice:** processing is priced on expanded volume, and hosting is priced on it every month thereafter; a budget built on collected gigabytes without an expansion assumption is wrong from its first line, always in the expensive direction.
- **The control:** expansion cannot be prevented (it is just the data's true size) but it can be anticipated (quotes stating the assumed factor), measured (actuals reported after processing, with variance explained) and mitigated (container-level date and custodian filtering before full expansion, where the toolset supports it).

§ 0 5 · THE ARITHMETIC

The multiplication chain, worked numerically

The same 100 GB estate, two scoping philosophies, illustrative but realistic mid-market rates (processing £45 per GB, hosting £12 per GB per month over 20 months, first-pass review £1.10 per document blended, with second-pass and privilege QC adding 30 per cent). Scenario A collects everything and promotes everything. Scenario B assesses first, collects 100 GB but culls to 40 GB promoted after deduplication, threading, date and term filters, and reviews a TAR-prioritised population.

CHAIN STAGE	A · INDISCRIMINATE	B · ASSESSED AND CULLED
Collected	100 GB	100 GB (targeted methods, same estate)
Expanded / processed (×2.2)	220 GB → £9,900	220 GB → £9,900
Promoted to hosting	220 GB × £12 × 20 months → £52,800	40 GB × £12 × 20 months → £9,600
Review population	~700,000 documents	~120,000 documents; TAR review of ~55,000 to a validated stop
First-pass review	700,000 × £1.10 → £770,000	55,000 × £1.10 → £60,500
Second-pass and privilege QC (+30%)	£231,000	£18,150
Production and PM (say)	£38,000	£14,000
Chain total	≈ £1,101,700	≈ £112,150, plus ~£9,000 of assessment and culling work

The nine-to-one difference is not a pricing trick: unit rates are identical in both columns. Everything is the chain: what was promoted, and above all how many documents reached human eyes. Two further readings of the table repay attention. First, the culling and assessment spend in column B (£9,000) returned roughly a hundred times its cost, which is the general shape of early-assessment economics. Second, column A is not safer: it reviews the same relevant documents buried in six times the noise, later, with more reviewer fatigue and a larger privilege-error surface, while processing five times the personal data. Indiscriminate collection increases expenditure at every stage and improves nothing.

The review population: the biggest lever

- **Per-document economics:** a reviewer's effective per-document cost is their rate divided by their pace: £55 per hour at 50 documents per hour is £1.10; complex documents, chat data and foreign language slow the pace and raise the unit. Second-pass review of first-pass positives and privilege QC typically add 25 to 40 per cent to first-pass cost; redaction is slower and dearer again.
- **Population, not rate, is the lever.** Halving the reviewer rate saves 50 per cent of review; halving the population saves 50 per cent of review *and* its second-pass overhead *and* the hosting of what was never promoted, and it is usually far easier to achieve defensibly.
- **The population is manufactured upstream:** deduplication (global, not just per-custodian), email threading (review the inclusive tail, not every step), date and custodian filters, negotiated hit-tested terms, and TAR prioritisation with a validated stopping point. Each is a percentage that compounds with the others: 30 per cent deduplication, then 40 per cent threading and term culling, then a TAR stop at half the residue multiplies to a fraction of the naïve population.
- **Workflow design is worth real money:** propagation of coding across duplicates and threads, sensible batching, clear decision trees and a short coding panel measurably raise pace without degrading quality; a review that runs at 65 documents per hour instead of 45 is a 30 per cent saving with no negotiation at all.
- **Match seniority to task:** first-pass relevance at contract-reviewer rates with sampling QC; associates on second-pass and privilege; partners on the escalation queue only. Rate-mix drift (qualified lawyers doing first-pass) is one of the quietest budget leaks in litigation.

§ 0 7 · THE CONTROLS

Ten control levers

LEVER	WHAT IT DOES
1 · Assess before you collect	In-place volume reports, sampled richness and overlap measurement turn scoping from fear into arithmetic; the highest-return spend in the exercise
2 · Scope collection tightly	Targeted, documented collection of tiered custodians and sources; forensic imaging where triggers require it, not as default; preserve-only for the marginal
3 · Cull at processing	deNISTing, global deduplication, date bounding and hit-tested terms applied where handling a document costs pence, not pounds: processing is where budgets are made, and suppressions stay reversible and audited
4 · Thread and near-duplicate	Review inclusive thread tails and cluster near-duplicates; routinely a third off the population by itself
5 · Use TAR with a validated stop	Prioritised review to a richness decline plus null-set sample; the population lever inside the review itself
6 · Stage the exercise	Core scope now, extensions behind evidence-defined triggers; money follows the case's actual needs instead of its opening anxieties
7 · Negotiate terms with data	Hit reports and sampled relevance rates in the exchange; negotiated culling terms have cut review sets by 71 per cent in practice
8 · Run hosting hygiene	Promote selectively, archive released tranches to cold storage, decommission at milestones, and diarise the hosting line for review every quarter
9 · Engineer the review	Propagation, batching, decision trees, pace monitoring and seniority-matching; buy documents per hour, not just hours
10 · Buy well	Itemised scenario quotes on stated assumptions (expansion factor, hosting term, pace), fixed or capped stages where the scope is known, and the §9 reading discipline for every quote

Budgeting and costs management

- **Precedent H's disclosure phase** is where this guide's arithmetic becomes a filed document: build it from the chain (collection scope, expansion assumption, hosting term, review population scenarios, rates and pace), state the assumptions, and keep the workings, because a disclosure budget that cannot show its derivation invites both judicial scepticism and later variance fights.
- **Budget in scenarios** where scope is genuinely undecided (Models still in play, terms unagreed): a base scenario with stated increments ("if Issue 3 proceeds to Model D: +£64,000") is more credible than a single number wide enough to cover everything, and it arms the CMC proportionality argument at the same time.
- **Consistency is a weapon and a trap:** your burden submissions, DRD cost estimates and budget must tell one story (the companion proportionality guide's point), and an opponent's inconsistencies between the three are legitimately deployed.
- **Monitor burn against the chain:** monthly provider reporting of actual versus assumed expansion, promoted volume, population and pace, with defined variance triggers (say, 15 per cent on any chain term) prompting a decision (rescope, restage, or a prompt budget-variation application under CPR 3) rather than a quiet drift toward an unexplainable total.
- **Recoverability disciplines the spend:** disclosure costs are recoverable in principle as litigation costs, but only proportionate, well-evidenced spend survives assessment; the itemised, decision-logged exercise recovers, and the indiscriminate one is where recoverability goes to die.

Reading a provider quote

- **Demand the units:** per-GB processing (on collected or expanded volume? which?), per-GB-per-month hosting with the assumed term, per-user licences, review rates with assumed pace, PM basis, and any minimums. A single blended figure is not a quote; it is a request for trust.
- **Find the stated assumptions:** expansion factor, matter duration, promoted-volume ratio, population estimate and its derivation. If they are absent, the quote cannot be compared with any other, which is sometimes the point.
- **Watch the classic traps:** the low headline processing rate paired with expensive long-tail hosting; hosting quoted on a 6-month assumption for a 24-month matter; review priced at an optimistic pace; "unlimited" anything (recovered elsewhere); analytics, productions, or project management priced as extras discovered later; and per-custodian minimums that punish the tiered scoping this series recommends.
- **Price the exit:** data return and decommissioning fees at matter end, and mid-matter migration costs, belong in the comparison; a platform that is cheap to enter and expensive to leave is priced accordingly.
- **Comparable scenarios or nothing:** give every candidate provider the same scenario sheet (volumes, sources, assumed term, population range) and require the quote in its structure; the spreadsheet then does the choosing, and the discipline itself signals a buyer the pricing games will not work on.

Worked example: one matter, two cost stories

RELLINGFORD V DANEHILL COMPONENTS (ILLUSTRATIVE)

A £3.4m warranty claim. The defendant's first provider quote followed instinct: image fourteen custodians' full estates (410 GB), process and promote everything, review with a large team. Chain arithmetic on the quote's own rates: processing ≈ £41,000 on ~900 GB expanded, hosting ≈ £237,000 over 22 months, review of an estimated 2.6m documents ≈ £3.1m with QC: a projection exceeding the claim. The instructing solicitors re-ran the exercise through the levers: a one-week assessment (£8,500) measured footprints and overlap, cut the collection to nine custodians' targeted sources (140 GB), and hit-tested terms with the opponent (three iterations, exchanged reports). Post-cull promotion: 52 GB. TAR-prioritised review stopped, validated, at 68,000 documents. Final chain: processing £14,000, hosting £13,700, review £97,000 with QC, production and PM £16,800: **≈ £150,000 against the £3.4m in issue**, filed as a scenario budget that survived the CCMC without argument, and matched at settlement by a costs schedule the other side did not attack. Same estate, same rules, same rates: the difference was the chain being priced before it was fed.

§ 1 1 · WHERE IT GOES WRONG

Common mistakes and technical limitations

Common mistakes

- **"Collect everything, filter later":** the chain fed at its first term, every stage inflated, the bill blamed on review.
- **Budgeting on collected gigabytes** with no expansion assumption: wrong by half from line one.
- **Promote-everything workflows:** the whole processed volume parked in hosting for the matter's life because promotion decisions were never made.
- **Hosting amnesia:** no quarterly review of the line, released tranches never archived, the platform decommissioned months after settlement.
- **Rate fixation:** negotiating pennies off processing while the population, the term and the pace (the multiples) go unmanaged.
- **Rate-mix drift:** qualified lawyers on first-pass relevance; the quietest leak in litigation budgets.
- **Unpriced scope creep:** custodians and sources added mid-matter without re-running the chain or varying the budget, discovered at assessment.
- **Quote-shopping headline rates** across non-comparable assumption sets; the trap the scenario sheet exists to close.
- **Cost secrecy:** measured cost evidence withheld from proportionality arguments it would have won.

Technical limitations

- **Estimates carry ranges.** Expansion, richness and pace vary by estate and case; state assumptions, report actuals, manage variances: precision arrives progressively, and pretending otherwise discredits the budget that pretended.
- **Some data defeats the standard chain:** chat, audio, video and databases are not "documents" and per-document arithmetic misprices them; cost them in their own units (hours, rows, report extracts) explicitly.
- **Culling has floors:** deduplication and threading percentages depend on the estate's actual redundancy; quote-stage promises of specific cull rates should be sampled, not assumed.
- **Cheap can be expensive:** the lowest-cost collection that fails chain-of-custody, or the culling shortcut that cannot be audited, buys a re-collection and an argument; defensibility is part of the price of everything in this guide.

§ 1 2 · INTERROGATORIES & DRAFTING AIDS

Questions to ask · Suggested wording

Ask your client

- What budget appetite and funding arrangements frame this exercise, and at what projected spend do we need a strategy conversation rather than an invoice?
- Who internally can pull volume reports so we can assess before we collect?
- Which sources would you fight to exclude on cost, and can we get the measurements that make the argument?

Ask your opponent

- Please state the itemised cost basis of your burden objections: units, rates, assumptions, and the derivation of your population estimates.
- Please reconcile your disclosure-phase budget with the scope you propose in the DRD.
- We propose exchanging chain assumptions (expansion, hosting term, populations) so the parties' cost submissions are comparable; please confirm.

Ask your eDiscovery / forensic provider

- Quote in our scenario structure: units and rates per stage, expansion factor assumed, hosting term assumed, population derivation, pace assumed, minimums, extras, and exit costs.
- What did your last three comparable matters actually run against quote, and where were the variances?
- What culling percentages does this estate's sampling actually support, and what would you fix or cap?
- What monthly burn report will we get, and can it show actual versus assumed on every chain term?

SUGGESTED WORDING · INSTRUCTION FOR AN ITEMISED SCENARIO QUOTE

"Please provide a costed proposal structured as follows, on the enclosed scenario sheet. For each of Scenarios 1 to 3 [core scope / core plus contested custodians / full demand]: (a) collection, itemised per source and method; (b) processing, per gigabyte, stating whether charged on collected or expanded volume and the expansion factor assumed; (c) hosting, per gigabyte per month and per user, on an assumed term of [n] months, with the archiving and decommissioning rates and any data-return or exit fees; (d) review, stating the population derivation, assumed pace, rate card by reviewer level, and the uplift assumed for second-pass and privilege QC; (e) production and project management bases; and (f) all minimums and exclusions. Please also state monthly reporting arrangements for actual versus assumed figures on each element. Quotes not in this structure cannot be evaluated."

SUGGESTED WORDING · BUDGET ASSUMPTION PARAGRAPH (DISCLOSURE PHASE)

"The disclosure phase is budgeted on the following assumptions: collection of [n] custodians' [sources] estimated at [x] GB; processing at an assumed expansion factor of [f]; hosting of an estimated [y] GB promoted volume for [m] months; a review population of approximately [p] documents derived from [culling basis], reviewed at an assumed blended rate and pace of [details], with second-pass and privilege review at [+z per cent]. If [defined contingencies: additional Model D issues / restoration of the archived sources / the opponent's proposed additional custodians] eventuate, the estimated additional cost is [figures], and a variation will be sought at that point. Workings are retained and available."

§ 13 · QUICK CONTROL

Checklist and red flags · When to involve a digital forensic expert

The cost-control checklist

- ☐ Chain priced per scenario before any collection commitment; assessment spend approved as the first line
- ☐ Collection scoped to tiered custodians and targeted sources; imaging only on forensic triggers
- ☐ Every quote itemised on the scenario sheet: units, expansion, term, population, pace, minimums, exit
- ☐ Culling run at processing, reversible and audited; dedupe, threading and term percentages sampled, not promised
- ☐ Promotion selective; hosting line diarised quarterly; released data archived; decommissioning planned
- ☐ Review engineered: propagation, batching, decision trees, pace monitoring, seniority-matching
- ☐ TAR with a validated stop where volumes justify it
- ☐ Precedent H built from the chain with stated assumptions and retained workings; scenarios for the undecided
- ☐ Monthly burn reports against every chain term; variance triggers defined and acted on
- ☐ Cost evidence deployed: DRD estimates, proportionality submissions and settlement analysis on the same numbers

Red flags

- Any scoping sentence containing "everything", "just in case" or "filter later".
- A quote or budget with no expansion factor, no hosting term, or one blended number.
- A hosting line that has never gone down.
- Review running while the population levers (dedupe, threading, terms, TAR) sit unpulled.
- Qualified lawyers doing first-pass relevance at scale.
- Scope creep without a re-priced chain or a budget variation.
- A burn report nobody reads, or none.

When to involve a digital forensic expert

Cost control meets forensics at four points. Targeted, defensible collection is cheaper than blanket imaging only if it is done to a standard that will not be re-done: examiner-designed scoping and documentation is what makes the cheap route the safe one. Difficult sources (tapes, legacy systems, encrypted and damaged media) need feasibility and cost statements that survive the other side's expert, in either direction of the argument. Sampled restores and examinations price a disputed source's real yield before anyone pays for the whole of it. And where an opponent's cost or burden claims look engineered, an examiner's review of their stated methodology and figures grounds the challenge. An honest number, defensibly produced, is the cheapest thing in disclosure.

§ 1 4 · COMMON QUESTIONS

Frequently asked questions

Our last disclosure bill was multiples of the estimate. What usually causes that?

In order of frequency: no expansion assumption (processing and hosting arrive at double the planned volume); promote-everything workflows feeding the hosting meter; a review population never actually derived, just discovered; scope creep nobody re-priced; and pace assumptions review reality did not honour. All five are visible in advance to a budget built from the chain with monthly actual-versus-assumed reporting, which is the guide's practical prescription.

Is TAR actually cheaper, or just fashionable?

On populations above roughly 40,000 to 50,000 documents, prioritised review with a validated stopping point reliably reviews a fraction of the population for equivalent or better recall, and the saving scales with volume; on small populations the setup and validation overhead can equal the saving. The economics are estate-specific: ask the provider to model both workflows on your measured population, with the validation design and its cost included, and decide on the arithmetic.

Are eDisclosure costs recoverable from the losing party?

In principle yes, as costs of the proceedings, subject to the usual tests: reasonably incurred, reasonable in amount and proportionate, policed through budgeting and assessment. Practically, recoverability tracks discipline: itemised spend flowing from recorded scoping decisions and a budget that matched the DRD recovers well; indiscriminate collection and unexplained hosting years recover badly. Spend as if every line will be assessed, because the winning scenario is precisely that it will be.

What does hosting really cost over a matter?

Multiply promoted gigabytes by the monthly rate by honest duration, then add user licences: 200 GB at £12 with a 24-month life is £57,600 before anyone opens a document, which is why the promote-selectively and archive-on-release habits repay themselves so quickly. The number most matters get wrong is duration: budget on the realistic life of the litigation, not the hoped-for one.

Should we push for fixed fees?

Fix what is measurable, cap what is estimable, and leave truly contingent stages unit-priced with variance reporting: fixed collection and processing against a defined scope works well; fixed review of an unmeasured population transfers a risk the provider will price defensively, and you will pay the insurance either way. The scenario-sheet discipline gets most of fixed pricing's benefit (comparability, predictability) without buying anyone's risk premium.

Do costs arguments really move courts?

Measured ones do. The regime is built around proportionate cost, judges manage budgets as a core function, and a party arriving with itemised chain arithmetic, sampled yields and a staged alternative supplies the material a costs-focused court wants to work with. What does not move courts is an adjective: the companion proportionality guide and this one are two halves of the same submission.

§ 1 5 · REFERENCE

Glossary

Blended rate

A single review rate averaging the team's seniority mix; check the mix behind it.

Burn report

Periodic actual-versus-assumed reporting on every chain term; the budget's early-warning system.

Chain (multiplication chain)

Collected volume × expansion → processing → hosting × term → population × per-document review.

deNISTing

Removal of known system files against reference hash lists; free volume reduction at processing.

Expansion factor

The ratio of processed to collected volume as containers unpack; typically 1.5x to 3x.

Hosting hygiene

Selective promotion, archiving of released data, decommissioning at milestones, quarterly line review.

Population derivation

The recorded arithmetic from processed volume through culls to documents for review.

Precedent H

The costs budget; its disclosure phase should be the chain with stated assumptions.

Promotion

Moving processed data into the hosted review workspace, where the monthly meter runs.

Rate-mix drift

Senior people performing junior review tasks; a silent per-document cost increase.

Scenario sheet

The buyer's fixed quote structure making provider proposals comparable line by line.

Validated stop

Ending review on richness decline plus a null-set sample, recorded; the population lever inside review.

Sources and authoritative references

The cost disciplines in this guide draw on materials published by our e-discovery practice and laboratory, referenced here as sources:

- e-discovery.uk, practice principles ("Review is where budgets are spent. Processing is where budgets are made"; "we aggressively cull noise before it reaches review; you pay for substance, not volume"): [e-discovery.uk](#) · [e-discovery.uk/edrm/processing](#)
- e-discovery.uk, EDRM Phase 02 · Preservation and Phase 03 · Collection (targeted, documented collection as the proportionate default) and Phase 05 · Review (workflow engineering, TAR validation and stopping evidence): [e-discovery.uk/edrm/collection](#) · [e-discovery.uk/edrm/review](#)
- e-discovery.uk, Knowledge Centre, including the case note on negotiated, hit-tested terms reducing a review set by 71 per cent: [e-discovery.uk/knowledge](#) · [e-discovery.uk/expertise](#)
- cflab.uk, digital forensics services (defensible targeted collection, feasibility and cost statements for difficult sources, sampled restores): [cflab.uk/digital-forensics-services](#) · guides for lawyers: [cflab.uk/guides](#)
- CPR Part 3 and PD 3D (costs management, Precedent H, budget variation): [justice.gov.uk, Part 3](#)
- CPR 1.1 (proportionate cost) and CPR Part 44 (basis of assessment, proportionality of costs): [justice.gov.uk, Part 1](#) · [justice.gov.uk, Part 44](#)
- CPR 31.7, PD 31B (ease and expense of retrieval; accessibility factors) and PD 57AD (the cost-related Extended Disclosure factors and the DRD's cost estimates): [justice.gov.uk, PD 31B](#) · [justice.gov.uk, PD 57AD](#)
- ICO, UK GDPR guidance including data minimisation: [ico.org.uk](#)

DISCLAIMER

This publication provides general information about eDisclosure cost management in the United Kingdom as at August 2026. All rates, factors and worked figures are illustrative only and vary by provider, estate and matter; obtain current quotations for any real exercise. The worked examples are fictional. This guide is not legal advice, does not create a professional relationship, and should not be relied upon in place of advice on the facts of a specific matter from a qualified lawyer or a suitably qualified forensic practitioner. Rules and guidance change; always check the current text. Links were live at the date of publication.

§ HOW A SPECIALIST LABORATORY CAN ASSIST

Working with Computer Forensics Lab

Our e-discovery practice (**e-discovery.uk**) runs the economics this guide describes as its operating principle: assess first, collect narrowly, cull aggressively at processing where documents cost pence, promote selectively, and review a population that has earned its place, with TAR validated to an evidenced stop. We quote in itemised scenarios on your assumptions, report burn monthly against every chain term, and practise hosting hygiene as routine. The laboratory keeps the cheap route defensible: examiner-designed targeted collection under chain of custody, feasibility and cost statements for tapes, legacy and encrypted sources that survive opposing experts, and sampled restores that price a disputed source before anyone pays for all of it. Where the money itself becomes the argument, our figures are built to be filed: DRD estimates, budget workings and CPR Part 35 evidence from the same arithmetic. Conflicts checks, confidential scoping discussions and fixed-fee estimates are routine.



I N S T R U C T T H E L A B

Speak to a forensic examiner, not a salesperson.

Describe your matter in confidence and an examiner will respond the same working day. Conflicts checks and scoping calls with US counsel are routine.

NEW ENQUIRIES

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