

Wearables And Fitness Tracker Forensics

Wearable devices record a body's activity, creating a digital diary of movement, health, and location. This guide explains how to understand, preserve, extract, and deploy this data as evidence, addressing its accuracy, attribution, and limitations for UK legal professionals.

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WEARABLEDEVICEFORENSICS · A GUIDE FOR UK LAWYERS Wearables and
Fitness-Tracker Forensics Heart Rate, Steps, Sleep and GPS: The Body's Digital Diary
COMPUTER FORENSICS LAB

§ ABOUT THE AUTHOR PREPARED BY COMPUTER FORENSICS LAB E-DISCOVERY TEAM
CLOUD HEALTH-DATA COLLECTION CPR PART 35 EXPERT REPORT S FULL
CHAIN-OF-CUSTODY DOCUMENTATION

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§ 01 · ORIENTATION Executive summary The headline point: a wearable records the body's activity, heart rate, steps, sleep and often GPS, but keeps evidence is reached through the account, obtained law full y, corroborated, and bounded by its accuracy and by the fact that it records the device, not certainly the wearer.

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§ HOW A SPECIALIST LABORATORY CAN ASSIST Working with Computer Forensics Lab
Speak to a forensic examiner, not a salesperson. INSTRUCT THE LAB
NEW ENQUIRIES EMAIL - DISCOVERY

Questions and answers

Is the data on the watch itself?

Only recently: the watch is a relay with limited storage, holding recent readings until they sync (§4). The fuller history is cached in the companion app on the paired phone, and the complete, detailed, long-term record lives in the manufacturer's cloud, which is usually the real source (§3, Example 2). So the account, not the watch, is what you preserve and collect first; extracting the watch alone yields a fragment.

How accurate is fitness-tracker data?

Indicative, not clinical: consumer sensors estimate, heart rate optically, sleep from movement, steps from motion, and can be wrong (§6). That does not make the data useless; it makes it evidence to be presented as indicative and corroborated against other sources, not asserted as medical measurement. Its accuracy and any gaps are explained honestly, so the court knows the weight it can bear.

Does the watch prove who was doing the activity?

No, only that whoever was wearing it did (§6, Example 3). Usually that is the owner, but not invariably, so attribution requires corroboration, the paired phone's location, messages, other evidence, and the finding is stated at the level the data supports. The wearable records a body's activity; identifying whose body, and where, comes from the corroborating sources beside it.

Can we get the other side's wearable data?

By the proper routes: preservation and disclosure of the relevant records, or a data export from the account, and for a party's own data a subject-access request is often a lawful, proportionate route (§4). Because this is special-category health data, collection is scoped to the relevant metrics and period and minimised, and handled with heightened care (§7). It is obtained law full y and proportionately, not scraped indiscriminately.

The device was reset. Is the data gone?

Usually not: a factory reset clears the watch, but the history has already synced to the cloud, and the account, preserved and collected law full y, holds the full record untouched by the reset (Example 2, §8). Resetting the device does not reset the account. And a reset performed after the duty to preserve arose may itself be a spoliation point (§10). The wiped watch is rarely the end of the record.

Is wearable health data specially protected?

Yes: activity, heart-rate and sleep data are special-category health data under the UK GDPR, among the most sensitive personal data, so their collection, disclosure and use carry heightened duties, a lawful basis, data minimisation and security (§7). In practice this means scoping to the relevant period and metrics, protecting the intimate data beyond the issue, and handling the whole collection with the care that health information demands. cflab. u k · e-discove r y. u k ©2026 Computer Forensics Lab Ltd ·cflab.uk ·e-discovery.uk ·info@cflab.uk ·+44 (0)20 7164 6915 Page 15 of 17

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