



Meeting	Forensic Services Committee
Date	6 August 2024
Location	Video Conference
Title of Paper	Digital Forensics – Next Steps and timeline for progression
Presented By	CS Conrad Trickett
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached	Appendix A –ISO 17025 Timeline 24-27

PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to provide SPA Forensic Services Committee members with an update on Police Scotland’s progress towards ISO 17025 accreditation.

This paper will specifically provide an update in respect of:

- Agenda item 6 – Digital Forensics – Next Steps and timeline for progression

Members are invited to note the contents of this paper and discuss accordingly.

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) is the largest publisher of quality standards in the world. ISO develop and publish standards across multiple industries. Adherence to these standards ensures that organisations around the world conform to the same management techniques, processes, controls, quality, products, and services.
- 1.2 ISO 17025 is the international standard for testing and calibration in forensic science laboratories. Essentially it is a set of requirements used to demonstrate that labs are operating a robust quality management system/framework and are competent to conduct the lab activities.

Specifically, the accreditation covers a variety of areas:

- Qualifications, training, and experience of staff.
 - Equipment – is it properly validated and maintained.
 - Procedures promote standardisation across labs.
 - Sampling and testing procedures.
 - Measurements can be traced.
 - Accurate recording and reporting.
 - Suitable test facilities.
- 1.3 Similarly to SPA Forensics, ISO 17025 has been deemed as the most appropriate and internationally recognised framework under which Digital Forensics can be assessed. It is used by police services in England and Wales and has now been formalised as a project within Police Scotland. Achieving ISO accreditation will build trust and confidence in our provision of evidential products and services to victims and witnesses.
- 1.4 Police Scotland, through the Policing in a Digital World Programme, are currently undertaking a project of work to deliver staged ISO 17025 accreditation to all five of its Digital Forensics Hubs (Aberdeen, Inverness, Glasgow, Dundee and Newbridge).

2. FURTHER DETAIL ON THE REPORT TOPIC

- 2.1 Further detail on the ISO 17025 Project can be found in the briefing paper presented by CS Conrad Trickett (Business Lead, Policing in a Digital World Programme) at the SPA Forensics Services Committee on 02 February 2024.

2.2 The timeline with respect to accreditation is currently under review for reasons outlined below however, an updated timeline covering activity in support of the accreditation journey for 2024/25 can be viewed with this paper (**Appendix A - ISO 17025 Timeline 24-27**).

Progress since date of last reporting (February 2024)

UKAS Accreditation

2.3 Following approval to procure UKAS accreditation services, contract negotiation was initiated by the Project team. The resulting finalisation period for this was over six months, with agreement being reached in February 2024. An Assessment Manager was thereafter not assigned by UKAS until end of May 2024, following which a meeting was held providing clarity with regards to the UKAS accreditation cycle detailed in the table below:

UKAS Cycle	Initial Assessment Visit	Surveillance Visit 1	Surveillance Visit 2	Surveillance Visit 3	Re-assessment
Intervals	3 months to close off actions	6-month interval	12-month interval	12-month interval	12-month interval
Duration	5 days	1 day	1 day	1 day	5 days

2.4 A UKAS pre-assessment will be conducted to determine compliance readiness prior to the first formal UKAS assessment visit.

Quality Assurance Team Resource

2.5 The ISO 17025 Project Team was operating at under 50% capacity at the start due to staff leaving the organisation. Since that time 2 recruitment processes have been undertaken and it is hoped that ISO Project Team will be restored to full complement by October 2024. During this period, the project Team has been supported by business as usual colleagues which has provided some resilience but has impacted on the project’s ability to progress.

2.6 This delay, brought about by contract negotiations and limitations around resource, has presented an opportunity, highlighting a shortage of capacity within the current team. Incorporating learning garnered from recent UKAS engagement with regards to

insufficient resources within the approved FTE, the Project has commenced a further review and series of benchmarking exercises across Forces within the UK to establish a best practice model that is sustainable during and post accreditation across all five labs.

- 2.7 This process includes a review of options relating to proficiency testing including the Inter-Lab Comparison Scheme operated within UK Law Enforcement. This is to ensure that Digital Forensics have sufficient resources to effectively schedule and manage these requirements long term.
- 2.8 It is expected following the benchmarking exercise that a submission for additional resources to supplement the small quality assurance team at present (3 FTE), being required to support the full end to end process including continued validation and verification requirements. This is required not only to become successfully accredited but also to maintain accreditation going forward. This may include an interim approach until we reach the final preferred model.

Roll out plan 2024/2025

- 2.9 Taking cognisance of the current landscape. In readiness for accreditation the Project have established a roll out plan which is currently in place across three sites covering documentation, processes, and on-site modifications, with expectation of the remaining sites being completed by summer 2025. This will support the first phase of accreditation at the Aberdeen Lab who will at this stage have been working at a steady state for a minimum period of at least 24 months prior to the UKAS formal visit.
- 2.10 Due to the aforementioned information, the Project expects the ISO timeline to require amendment that will accurately reflect the further work needed to meet UKAS accreditation. It is expected that accreditation exercises for Aberdeen and Inverness will be progressed. The current expected timeline for this at present is shown at Appendix A - ISO 17025 Timeline 24-27. A fuller detailed timeline and update including any changes required should re-modelling be needed, will be provided to the Committee following the completion of the resource resolution actions and benchmarking.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Costs relating to the ISO 17025 Project are within funding allocation.

4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are personnel implications associated with this paper however these are yet to be defined in terms of detail and number of resources.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications associated with this paper.

6. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The introduction of ISO 17025 accreditation will demonstrate that Police Scotland are achieving a high standard of service delivery in relation to Digital Forensics, in support of wider Criminal Justice service needs and to better meet the expectations of victims and witnesses. Reputational risks exist if this accreditation is not achieved, and criminal justice processes are negatively affected.

7. UNSOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no social implications associated with this paper.

8. COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 8.1 There are no community implications associated with this paper.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no equality implications associated with this paper.

10. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no environmental implications associated with this paper.

