



## Forensic Services Committee

6 August 2024

Minutes of the Forensic Services Committee held on 7 May 2024 via MS Teams.

Board Members present:	Paul Edie (Committee Chair) Caroline Stuart (Committee Member) Mary Pitcaithly (Committee Member)
Board Member apologies:	Katharina Kasper (Committee Member)
In attendance:	<b><u>SPA Forensic Services</u></b> Fiona Douglas, Director of Forensic Services Vicki Morton, Chief Operating Officer Alastair Patience, Head of Function Joanne Tierney, Head of Change & Development Helen Haworth, Head of Function Alan Connell, Head of Forensic Infrastructure and Support Kevin O'Hare, Communications and Engagement Specialist Derek Scrimger, Head of Function  <b><u>Crown Office</u></b> Ruth McQuaid, Procurator Fiscal High Court (Until 11:55am)  <b><u>Police Scotland</u></b> Suzanne Chow, Detective Chief Superintendent John Sheehy, Head of Portfolio Delivery - Change  <b><u>HMICS</u></b>

	<p>Brian Johnston, Lead Inspector</p> <p><b><u>SPA</u></b> Barry Sillers, Deputy Chief Executive Lesley Carnegie, Performance &amp; Impact Lead Jackie Kydd, Workforce Governance Lead Matthew Kirk, Strategy Research Performance Policy Change Advisor Lloyd Duncan, Finance Lead Graham Stickle, Audit and Risk Lead Colette Craig, Governance Support Officer</p>
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## 1. Introductions and Welcome:

### 1.1 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting.

### 1.2 Apologies

Raymond Brown, PIRC  
Amanda Coulthard, SPA

### 1.3 Declarations of Interest and Connections

There were no declarations of interest or connections.

### 1.4 Decision on taking business in private (Item 8 and 9)

Members **AGREED** to take items 8 and 9 in private.

## 2. Minute and Actions from previous meeting:

### 2.1 Minute from meeting held on 5 February 2024 for approval

Members noted the need to update members attendance to include Mary Pitcaithly and remove Fiona McQueen.

Members **AGREED** the Minute from the Forensic Services Committee on 30 October 2023, subject to the changes noted above, this as an accurate record of the meeting.

### 2.2 Rolling Action Log and Matters Arising

Members **NOTED** and **AGREED** the written updates provided.

There were no matters arising.

### **2.3 Decisions since last meeting**

There were no decisions since the last meeting.

## **3. Performance**

### **3.1 Forensic Services Director's Report**

Fiona Douglas (FDouglas) provided an update on the recent key activities across Forensic Services. During discussions the following matters were raised;

The Chair welcomed both Paul Stewart and Sam Curran joining the Forensic Services team. The Chair further commended the work in relation to UKAS accreditation, Operation Launchpad and Forensic Nurses Training. The Chair further expressed his thanks to staff at Howden Hall for their efforts around continuity during recent roof works.

Members sought clarity on what support was offered to staff working on Operation Launchpad. FDouglas highlighted the importance of providing support to staff that have been exposed to traumatic incidents. Forensics work closely with Police Scotland colleagues to ensure specialist support is being offered through the TRiM (Trauma Risk Management) process post incidents. Alongside that, there is a psychological supervision pilot, where proactive counselling support is offered to scene attending staff. This allows early identification of issues to allow proactive support to be put in place. It is hoped that this will prevent the impact of what trauma can have on staff, the feedback from this pilot has been positive.

The Chair sought clarity on whether the Forensic Nurses Training would be evaluated. FDouglas confirmed, like all training inputs, it would be evaluated, with the evaluation on this training being very positive. FDouglas advised that nurses from other areas may be able to benefit from this training, however, there will be a need to make an assessment on where this can add the most value. Forensic Services continue to work closely with NHS colleagues to ensure that training inputs are being delivered as and when required.

Members **NOTED** the report.

### **3.2 Forensic Services Performance Report – Q4**

Vicki Morton (VMorton) provided the Forensic Services Performance

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Report, Q4 2023/24 for Committee consideration. During discussions the following matters were raised;

The Chair referred to Search and Recovery Scenes and sought clarity on when the demand target would be met so members understand if the service is working more efficiently. VMorton advised that historically Forensic Services have always been around 70-75% attendance within 24 hours. It is an area of focus, and it is hoped that more visible areas in performance will come through later in the year (Q3/Q4).

The Chair referred to Laboratory delivery and asked what risks sat with the timeliness targets with 22% not achieving the original delivery dates. FDouglas advised that this area is where the FS Change Programme is aimed at making an impact, however, there is a need for full implementation of the Operating Model. FDouglas assured members that the risk of cases exceeding the statutory time limit was extremely low and the current 22% is in relation to the delay in Police Scotland investigative cases, noting that the strategy for the Operating Model was about moving the priority of these cases to progress them quicker.

The Chair sought assurance on the RAG status (red for Q4/amber Q3) for Drugs within the Internal Performance Status. Alastair Patience (APatience) advised that the RAG status was as a result of the lowest priority indicator and assured members that staff were being realigned to address the matter.

The Chair asked when members would see a refresh of the Performance Framework. VMorton advised that a refresh would take place before the end of the calendar year.

CStuart sought clarity on the following;

- When would the New Operating Model be fully implemented.
- Sickness absence days target of 5% (stretch 3.75%), are there any positive actions programmes to achieve this target.
- When will members see a Strategic Workforce Plan as this will be a critical piece to the New Operating Model and building capacity to deliver performance going forward.

VMorton advised that the full implementation of the Operating Model will take some time and depend on finances, however, assured members that they are doing what they can internally to invest and progress this piece. In terms of absence, there has been positive improvement, and this is due to a number of initiatives that have been built in internally. FDouglas provided members with some background on what is being done in

relation to the Strategic Workforce Plan and advised that members would have sight before March 2025.

Mary Pitcaithly (MPitcaithly) sought clarity on how management were addressing the frustrations of staff working within drugs but not seeing any progress of their performance within the RAG status. VMorton noted the importance that managers are having discussions with their staff around this. Staff understand that they are unable to control demand, however, noted the importance of managers looking at continuous improvement and supporting their staff on what data actually means for them. FDouglas added that these staff are being supported through this change process and assured members that staff understand that things will get worse before they get better.

Members **NOTED** the report and **AGREED** the following action;

**20240507-FSC – 001: Fiona Douglas to provide members with sight of the Strategic Workforce Plan before March 2025.**

### **3.3 Drug Driving Update**

Members were provided with an update on progress on the Drug Driving Toxicology Service. During discussions the following matters were raised;

The Chair asked for an update on the Long-Term Sustainable Model and sought clarity on when a business case would come forward. FDouglas advised that she was anticipating an outlined business case in the autumn when the options and potential costs are clearer before moving to budget discussions for 2025/26. An options paper, previously provided to SG a few years ago, has been refreshed a number of times, therefore members can be assured staff are not starting with a blank canvas with this piece of work.

Members sought clarity around the performance improvements in relation to Section 4 cases. APatience advised that as many of the Section 4 cases would be outsourced to progress development work. In terms of development work, a new instrument will be brought onstream which will build extra capacity.

Members **NOTED** the report.

### **3.4 Forensic Services Financial Monitoring Report Q4**

Members were provided with an update on the financial position of Forensic Services as at the end of P11 (28 February 2024) of the financial year 2023/24. During the discussion the following matters were raised;

The Chair sought clarity on what situation was in relation to capital slippage and whether there were any associated risks from not spending that capital. FDouglas advised that there are no risks and a lot of the slippage was out with Forensic Services control following instruction from PS to pause any non-comital expenditure.

CStuart sought clarity on whether Forensic Services had a month-by-month plan in place for capital. CStuart noted the importance of getting capital out the door early and for it to be tracked and traced. FDouglas advised that they have a month-by-month plan which is all profiled into the first part of the year. FDouglas assured members that all appropriate documentation has been submitted to procurement to allow them to forward plan, however, there is risk within procurement in terms of Police Scotland and their finance challenges. FDouglas noted that is previously an area that Forensic Services have not been strong but noted confidence for the year ahead. CStuart asked that consideration is given to bringing forward some of next year's plans for when there is slippage and an underspend somewhere else to maximise any funds. FDouglas agreed and noted that a lot of work was also being done on the longer-term capital planning.

Members **NOTED** the report.

#### **4. HMICS Assurance Review of Forensic Toxicology Provision – Improvement Plan and Timeline for Delivery**

Members were provided with an update on progress on the HMICS Assurance Review of Forensic Toxicology Improvement Plan and timeline for delivery. During discussions the following matters were raised;

Brian Johnston (BJohnston) welcomed the updates noting that good progress had been made. BJohnston advised that there would be benefit in HMICS and FS meeting in the next month to discuss some finer details in relation to the recommendations.

Colleagues from both Crown Office and Police Scotland both agreed that there was good collaborative working and joined up approach being taken forward.

Members **NOTED** the report.

#### **5. Forensic Services Change Programme Update**

Joanne Tierney (JTierney) provided members with an update on progress against the Forensic Services Change Programme Plan. During discussions the following matters were raised;

Members were advised that due to the complexity of interdependencies and associated timeframes, the original target date of June 2024 for delivery of the FBC is no longer achievable. Once the replan activity is completed, it is likely to be 18-24 months before a full business plan is available.

CStuart referred to the benefits section of the report and advised that there would be benefit in including, within future versions of the report, an area for quantifiable benefits (eg cashable, non cashable). JTierney welcomed this input and agreed to include within future reports.

CStuart referred to Project Manager Office (PMO) resource and sought clarity on whether there were any risks with resourcing and the governance of projects. JTierney advised that PMO resource has been a challenge for Police Scotland, however, they continue to support and do what they can to make resource available. JTierney advised that now there has been dedicated resource secured at digital division it is hoped that there will be a proper governance grip provided to the project. John Sheehy (JSheehy) acknowledged the challenge and noted that there was a vacancy for a Senior Project Manager to work with JTierney to oversee the 3 live projects. In terms of low level PMO support, there has been real difficulty to recruit, and it is anticipated that this challenge will continue.

Members **NOTED** the report and **AGREED** the following actions;

**20240507-FSC – 002: Joanne Tierney to include quantifiable benefits within future iterations of these updates.**

## **6. Forensic Services Business Plan**

FDouglas provided members with an update on the refreshed two-year business plan for Forensic Services. During discussions the following matters were raised;

The Chair sought clarity on how progress would be report to the committee over the period of implementation. FDouglas advised that she will continue to report as a balance scorecard within the performance report.

Members welcomed the strategic approach taken within the plan presented.

Members **NOTED** the report and **AGREED** the following action:

**20240507-FSC – 003: Fiona Douglas to progress against the Forensic Services Business Plan to be reported as a Balance Scorecard within future Performance Reports.**

## **7. Forensic Performance Improvement Group (FPIG)**

FDouglas updated members on issues discussed at the Forensic Performance Improvement Group (FPIG) and advised that she would provide an update from this group to future Forensic Service Committees.

Members **NOTED** the report.

APPROVED