

Meeting	Authority Meeting
Date	30 June 2020
Location	Video-Conference
Title of Paper	Forensic Services Update
Presented By	Tom Nelson
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached	No

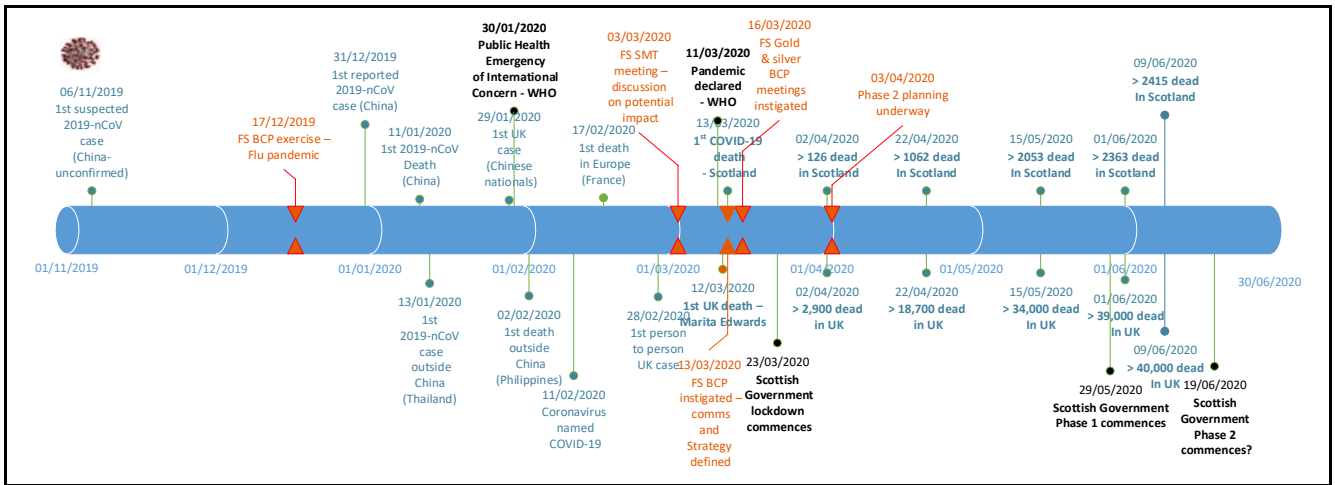
PURPOSE

To update members on Forensic Services response to the COVID 19 outbreak.

To illustrate the work undertaken by Forensic Services to maintain services to Police Scotland and COPFS and ensure the wellbeing of staff.

This paper is for discussion.

1. BACKGROUND - Pandemic timeline



- 1.1. This document is to provide the **SPA Board** with an update in regard to Forensic Services response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic since the previous paper of 20 May 2020.
- 1.2. Senior Management at Forensic Services continue to meet regularly with Police Scotland and the Crown Office & Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) to discuss current service delivery, anticipated demands and ongoing changes in strategy.
- 1.3. Forensic Services is enacting Phase 2 of the working plan towards a 'new normal' within current governmental guidance and befitting our Key Worker status, in order to maximise service to our partners and to the public.

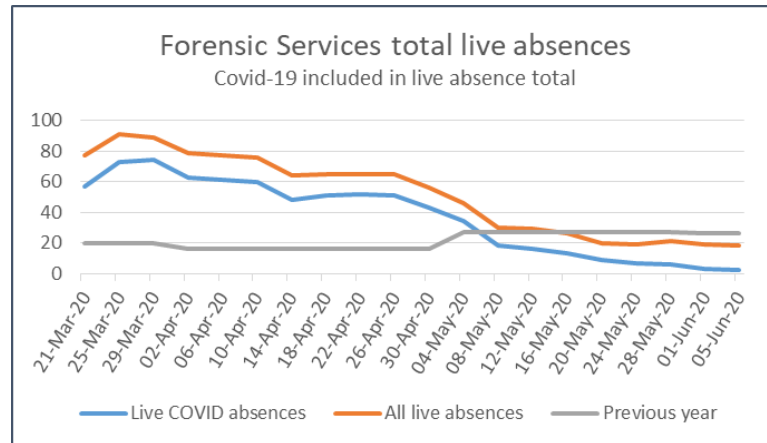
Phase 2 will deliver on these themes:

- Priority service provision;
- Maximising attendance at facilities incorporating physical distancing measures;
- Review of policy for scene attendance;
- Risk assessment of all procedure and practice;
- Maximising the Health, Safety and Wellbeing of staff throughout.

2. FURTHER DETAIL ON THE REPORT TOPIC

- 2.1. Priority demands from partners continue to be met. The development and implementation of Phase 2 has progressed significantly, with Forensic Services areas now increasing available capacity in partnership with Police Scotland and Crown Office Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS).

2.2. As reported previously, at the peak of Covid-19 related absences (29th March) Forensic Services had 79 members of staff absent as a result of self-isolation or showing symptoms of COVID-19. Availability of staff, taking into account all absences, at this point was as low as 71%. On Tuesday 09 June 2020, this number had fallen to just two staff members absent with COVID-19 related absence and 88% overall availability. People matters, including absence continue to be discussed and actioned through the FS Gold and Silver Groups.



2.3. Forensic Services Stock Management Group continues to manage personal protective equipment (PPE), key consumable supplies and instrument maintenance issues. PPE, particularly gloves and laboratory coats suitable for forensic analysis use, is presenting challenges for Forensic Services, as for all organisations. All short supply items are currently being actively managed so there is no impact on Operational delivery.

2.4. Forensic Services Phase 2 has progressed significantly, following the main tenets of:

2.5.

- Environment:
 - What changes will we need to make in our processes?
 - Ways of Working.
 - Scientific Processes.
 - Management changes.
 - Training people in any new processes.
 - Monitoring and ensuring compliance.
- Work:
 - Understand current and near-future partner requirements, including the investigations of lower level crimes.

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- Estimate ability to achieve delivery of partner requirements given current restrictions.
 - Ensure effective communication across our teams.
 - Monitoring of performance.
 - Managing performance, including remote working.
 - Ensure agility to respond to changing external circumstances.
 - Creating operational 'space' to deal with any high levels of demand experienced when restrictions are reduced and/or lifted.
- People:
 - Continue to monitor the Health, Safety and Wellbeing of our people.
 - Ensure Line Managers keep in touch with their staff and provide support, advice and guidance.
 - Manage the availability of people for work and balance remote and on-site working.
 - Support people through this period of continuous change.

2.6. Forensic Services Operations Managers and the SMT have developed plans and projections which are being discussed with Police Scotland and COPFS. Capacity has been defined across all areas of Forensic Services. This is an ongoing and developing exercise that is influenced by a number of internal and external factors, with Staff Health, Safety and Wellbeing remaining at the heart of our response. We are working to maximise the interaction between remote working, scene attendance and laboratory examination and analysis, with particular dependency on Estates and ICT support, facilitating physical distancing in the laboratory and also remote working capability.

2.7. Forensic Services' challenge is to maximise the overall capacity, joining together each discipline within the organisation that contributes to service provision, from crime scene to forensic report, managing bottlenecks through the process.

2.8. To maximise the service to Policing and the Crown, Forensic Services needs to be able to prioritise work. A number of factors are therefore being discussed with partners, such as:

- Requirement to minimise the impact on the Local Policing response;
- Scene Attendance Policy reviewed and priorities considered collaboratively to manage risk to staff and to increase confidence in control measures;
- Policy decisions on types of testing undertaken;
- Reduction of request to cover only what is actually required;

- The Phase 2 recovery plans for Police Scotland and COPFS must take account of the capacity available and caseload;
- Prioritisation needs to be undertaken at a system level with an impact assessment for each partner and plans confirmed once the impact is fully understood;
- Collective coordination of demands on services are critical to ensure best use of available capacity.

3. Partner Engagement regarding workload

3.1. There has been significant engagement with our partners Police Scotland and the COPFS in relation to management of our workload as we move into working in the new normal. Recognising that:

- During the lockdown there has been an overall reduction in crime, particularly less serious crime.
- Following relaxation of lockdown measures that crime patterns may change.
- If there is a correlating reduction in demand for services that offsets any risk of our reduced capacity.
- There is a requirement to understand what the risk is to the system as a result of the reduced service provision.
- Effective prioritisation could reduce the risk.
- Where possible if there are bottlenecks in the 'new normal' based on this new picture of demand then what collective measures can be taken to reduce these.
- This provides opportunities for change and to challenge existing ways of working.

4. Ongoing BAU priorities

4.1. Continuing critical BAU activity is seen as important to provide a balance between Covid-19-related changes and pre-Covid activities.

- Forensics 2026 continues to be a priority with ongoing activity in Operational Improvement Plans and in the formation of the Initial Business Case.
- Planning is underway to facilitate the 2020 UKAS assessments. Work is ongoing to establish how these can be undertaken utilising available technology whilst maintaining physical distancing and ensuring the Health, Safety and Wellbeing of staff throughout the assessment process. Learning from other UK forensic providers is being facilitated through the Association of Forensic Science Providers (AFSP).

- Organisational Risk Registers continue to be reviewed and updated to ensure that appropriate mitigating actions are implemented to reduce risk, with particular focus on Covid-19 related risks.
- Forensic Services Leadership Day, timetabled for 3rd June, was held via MS Teams, with the focus being on dealing with complex issues, leaving the past behind and moving forward with the 'new normal'.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1. There are financial implications associated with the work being progressed to address the COVID-19 response, to date these have been associated with:

- Purchase of additional laptops to allow staff to work remotely where appropriate.
- Purchase of additional consumables and reagents to ensure sufficient stock levels to continue activity should supply chains fail.
- Additional cleaning and personal protective equipment for staff.
- Purchase of materials to enforce physical distancing measures at Forensic Services facilities.

5.2. These costs are being captured separately and will be reported at the end of the next quarter.

6. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

6.1. There are no direct personnel implications associated with this paper.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1. There are no direct legal implications associated with this paper.

8. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1. There are no direct reputational implications associated with this paper.

9. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1. There are no direct social implications associated with this paper.

10. COMMUNITY IMPACT

10.1. There are no direct community impact implications associated with this paper.

11. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1. There are no direct equality implications associated with this paper.

12. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

12.1. There are no direct environmental implications associated with this paper.

Recommendations

SPA Board members are asked to note and discuss the content of the report and the continuing work in this area.