

Meeting	Forensic Services Committee
Date	25 October 2021
Location	MS Teams
Title of Paper	Forensic Services Director's Report
Presented By	Fiona Douglas, Director Forensic Services
Recommendation to Members	For Noting
Appendix Attached	No

PURPOSE

To update members on the recent key activities across Forensic Services

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report is to update members on activities across Forensic Services during the past few months.

2. UPDATES**Senior Management Team changes**

- 2.1 Following my appointment as Director of Forensic Services, I have put in some interim arrangements in place to ensure that the work the Forensic Services SPA Senior Management Team continued as smoothly as possible throughout and beyond the handover period.
- 2.2 Vicki Morton agreed to take over the majority of my previous change role. Her vast experience, as a permanent Scientific Head of Function, will be crucial in helping FS deliver the benefits that our change programme will make.
- 2.3 Alastair Patience has taken up the role of interim Head of Physical Sciences, backfilling for Vicki Morton. Gary Holcroft will lead on the Core Operating System project and other additional IT related change work, while continuing in his current role bringing the Post Mortem Toxicology service and staff into FS next year.

- 2.4 Over the coming months I will be taking forward a restructure of the Senior Management Team, as was recommended in the Thematic Inspection of Forensic Services by HMICS back in 2017, and I hope to have this completed by next spring.

Operation Purpose

- 2.5 On 7 October 2021, George Metcalf, was found guilty of the rape and murder of Patricia Henry, 46, at her flat in Girvan, South Ayrshire, in November 2017. He was also found guilty of attempting to defeat the ends of justice.
- 2.6 After being escalated from a missing person enquiry to a possible "no body murder" enquiry by Police Scotland and the COPFS, Forensic Service's Lead Forensic Scientist (Major Crime) supported this operation (Operation Purpose) and led on the forensic strategy.
- 2.7 The forensic examination of Metcalf's home alone took months with scene examiners and forensic scientists attending daily over three months.
- 2.8 Forensic Services received more than 100 submissions to the forensic laboratory for further examination by Biology, Mark Enhancement, Fingerprints, and Chemistry colleagues. Scene examiners took thousands of images during the enquiry with books of photographs produced for court use.
- 2.9 Patricia Henry remains are still to be located.

Delivery of the Forensic Strategy

- 2.10 Since the approval of the Full Business Cases and delivery approach for our new Operating Model, Scene Deployment, and Access to Lab project at the last full meeting of the SPA, we have updated all staff on this decision and also met with the Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee (JNCC) on the 21st of October.
- 2.11 Engagement with the Trades Unions, as well as with other key partners, particularly Police Scotland and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, has been embedded throughout this process.
- 2.12 We will soon be able to start on the formal full consultation period – which we estimate will take around six months. This will allow full

and meaningful consultation with all staff and will include full and detailed consideration of any alternative proposals brought forward by staff during this consultation. All staff will be offered a great deal of support to help them in this process from FS colleagues, managers, the project teams, and their trade union representatives.

UKAS annual assessment

- 2.13 UKAS are currently carrying out their annual assessment, with extensive visits to the FS four main laboratories between October and December. This is a re-assessment - at the end of our four-year accreditation cycle - and is required to be conducted on site; these cannot be conducted remotely, as was possible last year. Extensive work has been carried out to ensure these visits are being carried out in Covid-safe environments.
- 2.14 The UKAS technical team are reviewing new instrumentation in the Drugs teams, and an improved method of extracting DNA evidence from Sexual Assault swabs on all four main sites, with a view to extending the scope of accreditation. In addition, and to ensure consistency of provision of forensic toxicology services across the UK, FS is one of many organisations undergoing a review of the Toxicology methods against the UKAS standards document Lab 51.

Post Mortem Toxicology

- 2.15 Significant progress has been made in the past quarter in Project Weaver – the transition of Post Mortem Toxicology services from the University of Glasgow into Forensic Services. There is a good collaborative approach across all the work streams and partners.
- 2.16 Representatives from the University of Glasgow and Forensic Services and the PS Estates Team have signed off on the detailed design outline design and the site conversion works have been put out to tender and significant progress has been made regarding the procurement of the main scientific equipment.
- 2.17 The formal engagement process with the University of Glasgow also started in September and a framework on how the due diligence, consultation, and staff engagement will occur was agreed. This includes engagement with the two trades unions representing staff - Unison and Unite.

2.18 Staff vacancies

To ensure FS met our budget, we held off from filling some vacant posts towards the end of the last financial year. Our approach has proved to be overcautious, given the time taken to fill these vacancies and achieve staff starting in post. This is why there are more posts vacant than usual in FS, these posts are currently in different stages of the recruitment process as we are keen to fill these vacancies as soon as practicable.

Drug driving

- 2.19 Demand for Section 5A drug driving analysis remains significantly higher than the Forensic Services capacity with caseloads increasing.
- 2.20 Outsourcing of a further 300 cases has been agreed previously and this started in September. Further internal and external funding streams are being explored.
- 2.21 Marginal gains are being explored or are being implemented but these initiatives will not solve the underlying issue of exceptional demand.
- 2.22 Engagement continues between Forensic Services, COPFS, Police Scotland and Scottish Government to explore options to develop a sustainable model for this new enhanced drug-driving toxicology service.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no financial implications in this report.

4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no personnel implications associated with this paper.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

6. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no reputational implications associated with this paper.

7. SOCIAL 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.

RECOMMENDATION

Members are requested to note the information contained within this report.