

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Authority Meeting</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>20 May 2020</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>Video-conference</b>
<b>Title of Paper</b>	<b>COVID-19 Update</b>
<b>Presented By</b>	<b>Tom Nelson, Director of Forensic Services</b>
<b>Recommendation to Members</b>	<b>For discussion</b>
<b>Appendix Attached</b>	

**PURPOSE**

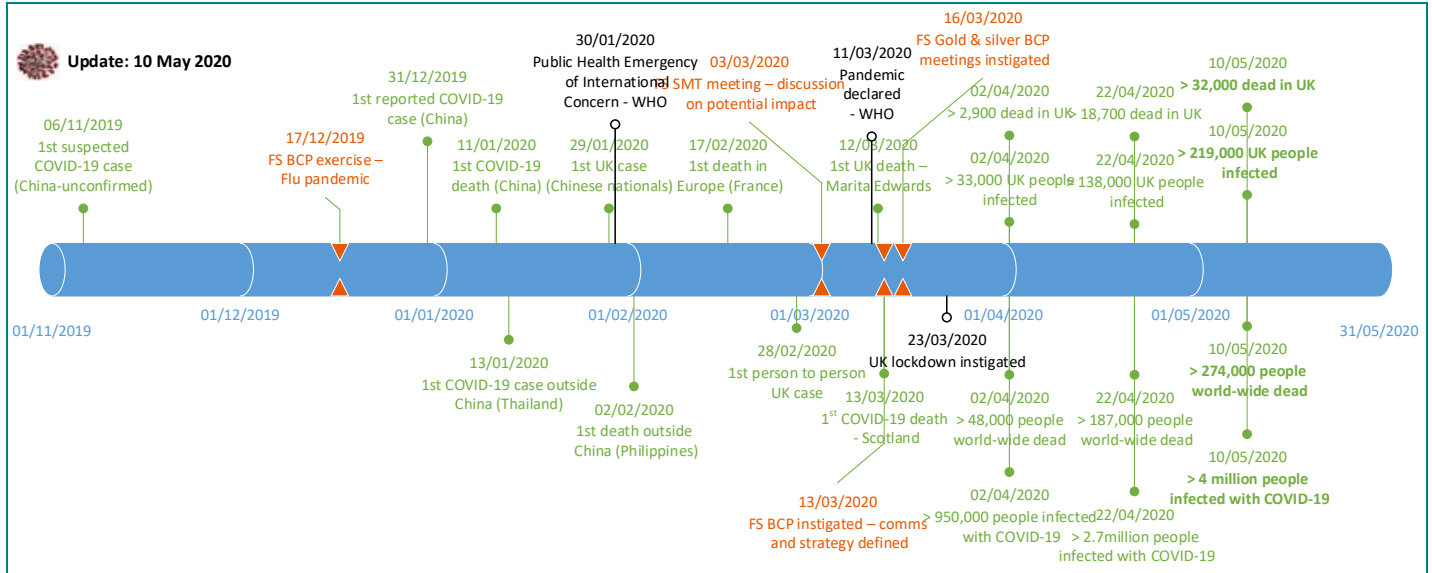
To update members on Forensic Services response to the COVID 19 outbreak.

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.

## Phase I – Update

### 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 30 Apr 2020.
- 1.2. Senior Management at Forensic Services continue to meet regularly with Police Scotland (PS) 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 focused on delivery of Phase 2 of the working plan, to establish 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 focus on three themes:
  - **Environment** – to develop new ways of working - at scenes, in laboratories and in common areas of our facilities.
  - **Work** - to move from the current reduced service to a delivery service focused on priority work.
  - **People** - to continue to have the health, wellbeing, and safety of staff at the heart of everything we do.

### 2. FURTHER DETAIL ON THE REPORT TOPIC

- 2.1. Priority demands from partners continue to be met. Discussions on enhancements to current service delivery are ongoing.

- 2.2. 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. Availability of staff, taking into account all absences, at this point was as low as 71%. As of two weeks ago (23rd April) this number had fallen to 52 absent with 86% availability. Following a short period of plateauing, there continues to be a steady reduction in the number of Covid-19 related absences. Consistent with an exercise implemented in Police Scotland, line managers have (from 4th May) commenced a period of engagement with those who have been self-isolating for a period of more than 14 days to ensure all the correct provisions and safety precautions were in place to enable individuals to work in some capacity if appropriate or to discuss if alternative options may exist. In addition a testing programme has enabled staff who believed they are symptomatic to be tested, allowing those with negative results to feel confident about returning to work. Covid-19 absences, as of 7th May, stand at just 20 with 91% availability across Forensic Services demonstrating a positive position in challenging circumstances. People matters, including absence continue to be discussed and actioned through the FS Gold and Silver Groups.
- 2.3. Forensic Services have established a Stock Management Group to manage personal protective equipment (PPE), key consumable supplies and the instrument maintenance issues. The Group is underpinned by participation from all Operational areas where real time stock records are being maintained. Stock is formally reviewed weekly and any actions taken for items in short supply are progressed with support from Police Scotland Procurement. The Group reports to the Forensic Services SMT on a weekly basis to ensure stock management is considered in relation to all other operational matters. PPE, as for all organisations, is presenting challenges for Forensic Services however this is currently being managed so there is no impact on Operational delivery.
- 2.4. The development of the Phase 2 plan has progressed significantly. The main tenets of the plan have been established:
- **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:**

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- Understand current and near-future partner requirements, including the investigations of lower level crimes.
- 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

2.5. Forensic Services SMT have developed a draft plan for the changes intended for implementing for Phase 2. This will help to guide the operational plans being formulated by Operations Managers.

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

- Forensics 2026 continues to be a priority with ongoing activity in Operational Improvement Plans and in the formation of the Initial Business Case.
- The Forensic Services Management System Review, a requirement under ISO 17025 accreditation, was held and gave ongoing strong assurance of the maintenance of a high quality forensic service to our partners.
- Organisational Risk Registers continue to be reviewed and updated with assistance from Graham Stickle (SPA Strategy & Performance), 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 3<sup>rd</sup> June, will continue albeit using remote meeting options. The main focus will be the ongoing development and implementation of Phase 2.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

3.1.1. Purchase of additional laptops to allow staff to work remotely where appropriate.

3.1.2. Purchase of additional consumables and reagents to ensure sufficient stock levels to continue activity should supply chains fail. This should not result in increased annual budget spend but may result in a higher costs being incurred in the first quarter of this financial year.

3.1.3. Additional cleaning and personal protective equipment for staff.

3.2. Incremental costs related to COVID-19 response are being captured separately and reported monthly.

### **4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1. We recognise that COVID19 impacts all of our staff in different ways which is why we have put our staff's Health, Safety and Wellbeing as a strategic aim.

### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

### **6. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

### **7. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

### **8. COMMUNITY IMPACT**

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

### **9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

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

**10. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS**

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

**Recommendations**

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