



Meeting	Forensic Services Committee
Date	28th October 2024
Location	MS Teams
Title of Paper	Forensic Services Performance Report – Quarter 2 2024/25
Presented By	Fiona Douglas, Director of Forensic Services
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached	Forensic Services Performance Report Q2 2024/25

PURPOSE

To present Forensic Services Performance Report, Q2 2024/25 for Committee consideration.

This paper is presented in line with:

- The Scottish Police Authority Scheme of Delegation

This paper is for discussion.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Forensic Services Performance Report is presented for Q2 2024/25.
- 1.2 This report captures activity conducted across SPA Forensic Services and aligns to the [Forensic Services Strategy](#) and the Forensic Services Performance Framework.
- 1.3 The report demonstrates Forensic Services delivery over the past quarter through the following:
 - Progress updates on Forensic Service commitments laid out in the annual business plan;
 - Qualitative performance data;
 - Reporting of targets against those set out in the Memorandum of Understanding with Police Scotland and COPFS.

2. FORENSIC SERVICES PERFORMANCE REPORT – Q2 2024/25

2.1 Report appended.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no financial implications in this report.

4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no personnel implications in this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no legal implications in this report.

6. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no reputational implications in this report.

7. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no social implications in this report.

8. COMMUNITY IMPACT

8.1 There are no community implications in this report.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no equality implications in this report.

10. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no environmental implications in this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are invited to discuss the information provided in this report.

OFFICIAL

Forensic Services Report 2024/25: Quarter 2



OFFICIAL

Business area	Page	Business area	Page
Executive summary	3	Our People – Short- and long-term absence	10
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Business Plan compliance	5	Overview – Search & Recovery Scenes	12
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Performance has remained strong throughout Quarter 2. There has been significant and continued improvement over the past year by the Volume Crime Team – who have reduced the overall caseload by 46% since this time last year. Scene examination incident response within 24 hours also continues to improve and is now 87% for the quarter - against a target of 90% - proactive management in the tasking unit and deployment has led to improved service - although demand has been lower than usual. This continued reduction in requests to examine crime scenes is to be explored with Police Scotland in a short life working group.

There has also been a significant increase in positive feedback reported from partners, including Police Scotland and COPFS, to 30 – in the previous period there were 16 reports while in same quarter last year Q2 it was 10.

The number of working days lost to absence continues to show a marked decrease since Forensic Services implemented a series of initiatives and organisational change through the Op Model. Absence rates were at an all-time low in August (based on data going back to before 2021) and have now been below target for two quarters. There has been a 26% reduction in the Q2 average absence in 2024-25 compared with 2023-24.

There was one RIDDOR reported in Q2, relating to a Scene Examiner being injured undertaking manual handling activity. There has been a significant increase in the number of reportable Health & Safety incidents – although on further investigation these are due the multiple reporting of the same incidents.

Our Partners

5 Year demand forecasting



Implement the new Performance Framework reporting



Deliver a Joint Biometrics Strategy with PS



RAG status key

Completed

Started / on track

Started / issues being managed and monitored closely

Started / issues in need of attention

Our People

Introduce an ongoing process for absorbability mapping and impact analysis

Proactive management of long-term absence return

Embed the new management structure



Our Resources

Develop a FBC and secure funding for the drug driving long term sustainable model

Deliver the 2024-25 efficiencies plan

Develop a FBC and secure funding for a new Core Operating System

Our Processes

Develop a long-term Digital & Data plan
















Deliver the refreshed Criminal Toxicology improvement plan




Deliver the Quality Improvement plan

This slide indicates the top 3 activities to be delivered within 2024-25.
















	Completed	Started/on track	Started /issues being managed and monitored closely	Started / issues in need of attention
Our People	1	6	1	0
Our Resources	0	3	2	0
Our Processes	0	7	1	0
Our Partners	0	5	2	0


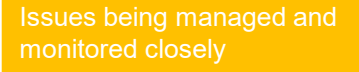

The completed activity relates to the introduction an ongoing process for absorbability mapping and impact analysis prior to the implementation of change. An absorbability matrix has now been prepared and is being used to support change activity and will be updated on a quarterly basis.

	Activity	STATUS Q2 2024-25	STATUS Q1 2024-25	Year to Date	Comments
Strategic Outcome 1 Our people are supported through a positive working environment, enabling them to provide excellent forensic services	Absence rate				Absence rates continue to reduce as a result of proactive management and support
	Reporting of injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 - HSE				1 RIDDOR incident reported. Search and recovery scene examiner – a manual handling injury.
	Management Training				On-going and on track
Strategic Outcome 2 Forensic Services are sustainable, adaptable and prepared for future challenges	Compliance to Business Plan				Updated plan – second quarter – On track
	Compliance to Operating Model – budget constraints withstanding				Most of the business activities has transitioned into a capability lead approach.

Rag status key
 On track
 Issues being managed and monitored closely
 Issues in need of attention

The status of key aspects of our Performance Framework is positive with the majority assessed as green/on track.

	Activity	STATUS Q2 2024-25	STATUS Q1 2024-25	Year to Date	Comments
Strategic Outcome 2 Forensic Services are sustainable, adaptable and prepared for future challenges	All performance data				Overall performance is good. Areas for improvement are highlighted in the internal performance status (slide 15)
	Capital and Revenue plan (Inc. efficiencies)				Predicted on target for financial year
Strategic Outcome 3 Forensic Services deliver high-quality, ethical services; and leads to advance forensic science	Compliance to UKAS ISO17025				This financial year's round of accreditation assessments are due to begin in November 2024.
Strategic Outcome 4 Forensic Services work collaboratively with partners to serve the needs of the public and Criminal Justice in Scotland	Partnership working				Biometrics Joint Strategy work is ongoing with Police Scotland. The deadline has moved to the end of the FY due to PS resourcing their target Operating model.
	Public Confidence in FS				Good feedback from Police Scotland on work of FS.

Rag status key
 On track
 Issues being managed and monitored closely
 Issues in need of attention

Performance data has been assessed as amber as there are internal areas of Forensic Services which are being managed and monitored closely, as noted later in this report.

In summary, assessment against the Performance Framework provides assurance that the key internal processes to set, deliver, monitor, and report on our strategic priorities are effective. We strive for continuous improvement, as set out in our Business Plan for 2024-2026.

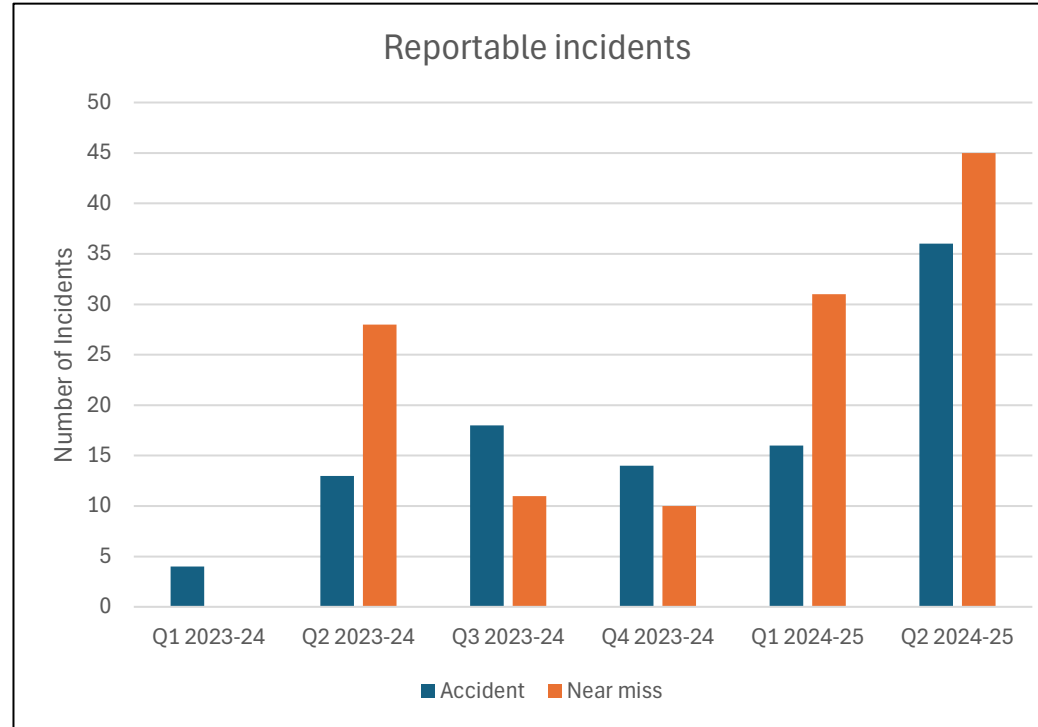
Forensic Services received a concern on the 8 August 2024 regarding an on-going issue within one of the laboratory areas from the Health and Safety Executive. We provided a response a week later.

On the 19 September 2024, HSE replied saying that they had concluded the Forensic Services response was fully satisfactory, and the concern has been closed.

An improvement plan is in place which has taken learning points from audit reviews carried out within the Quality Management system and by our Police Scotland Health and Safety advisors.

Learning points will include reporting of accidents. Currently, we are reporting the same events multiple times, which is why there has been a large increase in reportable incidents in Q1 & Q2 - with multiple reporting of the same incidents.

Accident/Near Miss statistical trend



Risk Status: Low

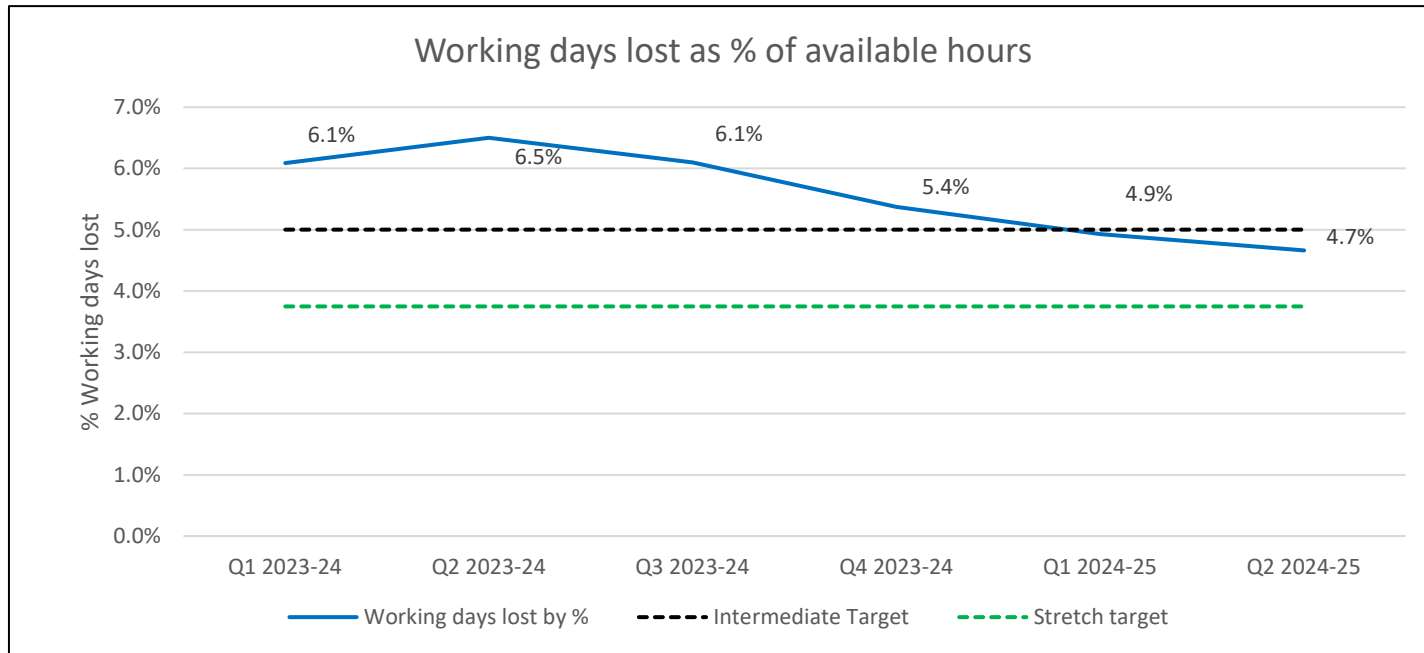
Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations - RIDDOR 2013 – HSE

There was one RIDDOR incident reported in Q2. This related to a Search and Recovery Scene Examiner being injured as a result of a manual handling activity.

The regulations require the reporting to HSE of deaths at work, major injuries caused by accidents at work, some work-related diseases, dangerous occurrences and gas incidents.

Our People – Working days lost

The number of available hours equates to the full-time equivalent for that month multiplied by the number of working days in the month. The number of working days lost relates to sickness absence days logged in the People & Development management system.



Target (stretch)
5% (3.75%)

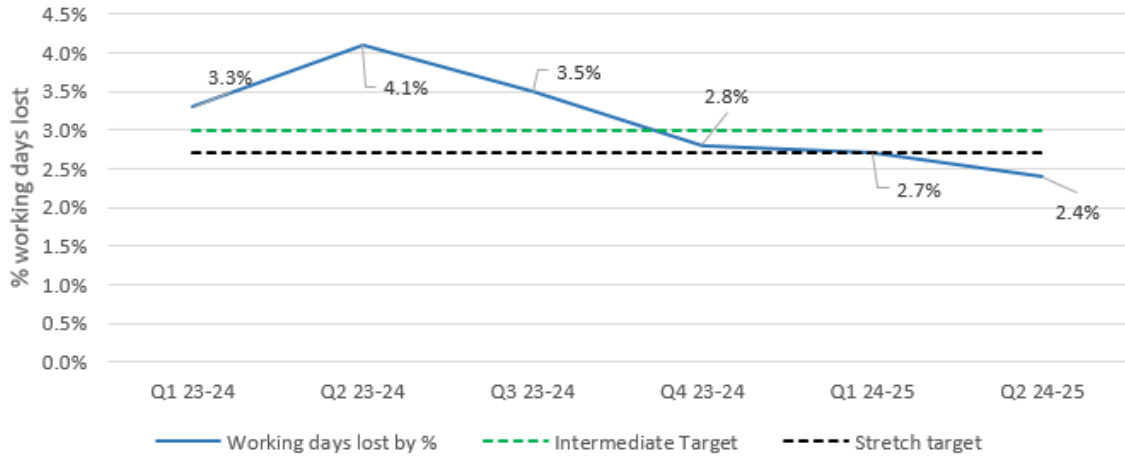
Absence includes health, injury, work-related issues, bereavement, and other reasons.

Absence rates were at an all-time low in August (based on data going back to before 2021).

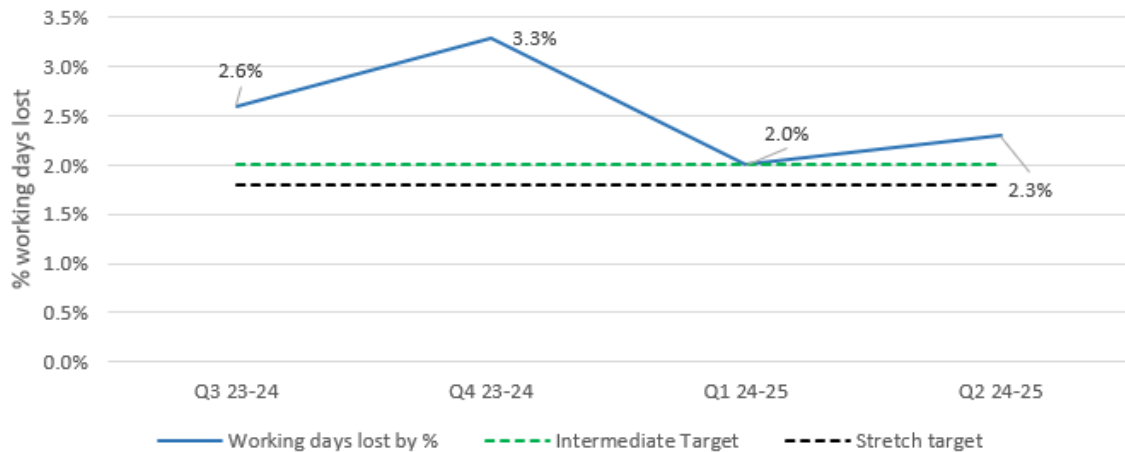
There has been a 26% reduction in the Q2 average absence from 2023-24 to 2024-25.

The number of working days lost continues to show a marked decrease since Forensic Services implemented a series of initiatives and organisational change through Op Model. These are having a positive impact and include: managers based with and supporting their people; revised shift patterns; psychological supervision activity; and management training and awareness.

Long term absence as % of available hours



Short term absence as % of available hours



The long-term and short-term absence averages for Q2 are 16 and 5.5 days (respectively). Menopause has now been segregated from miscellaneous and is a reportable category for data purposes.

LTA target (stretch)
3% (2.7%)

Last FY Av. 3.4%
YTD Av. 2.6%

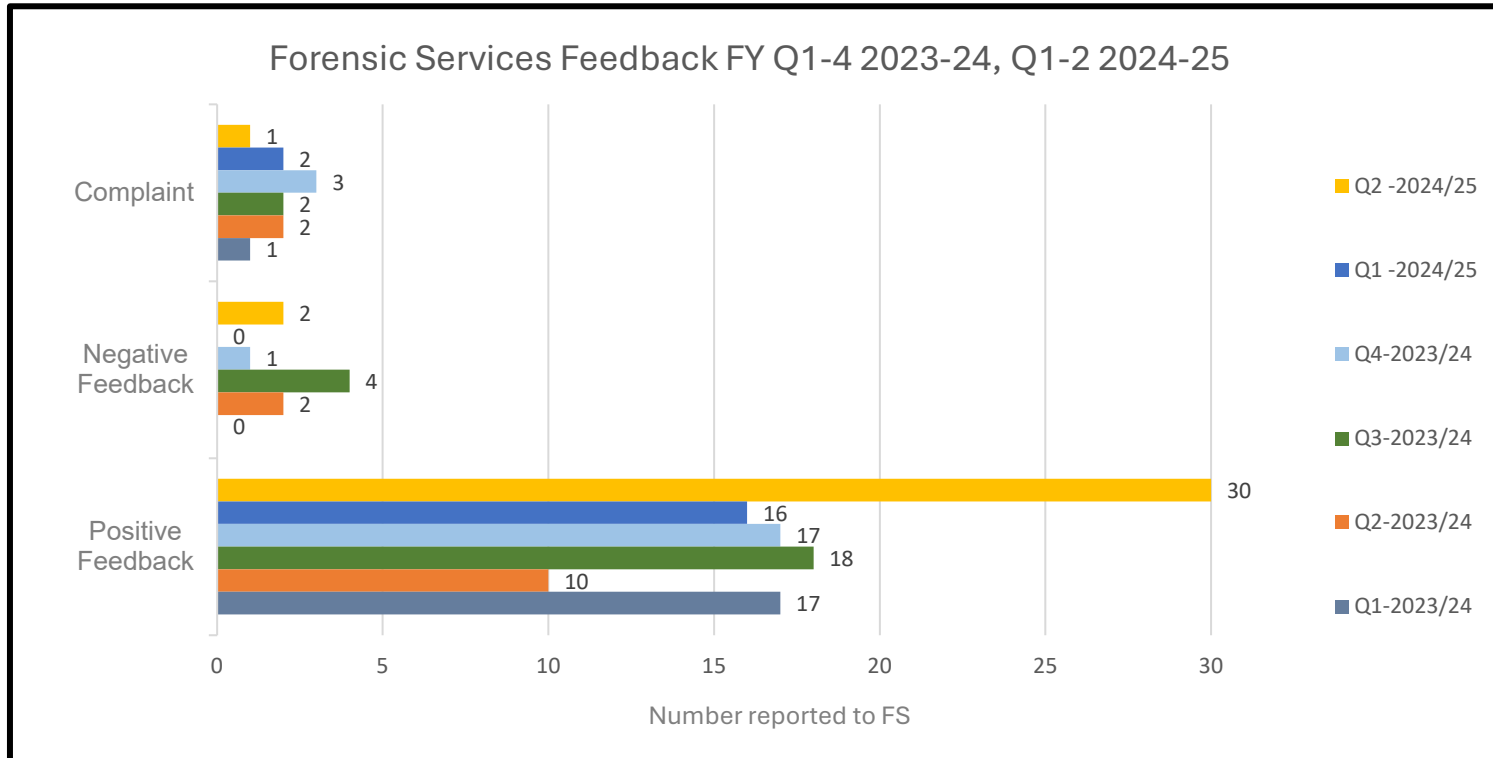
Long term absence (LTA) is defined as any period over 28 working days. There has been a 30% reduction in respiratory absences from Q1 to Q2. Musculo-skeletal has reduced to zero in August and September where the average number of days (28 days) has reduced over the past six months. This is likely to be the return of an individual via a phased return.

STA target (stretch)
2% (1.8%)

Last FY Av. 2.6%
YTD Av. 2.2%

Short-term absence (STA) is any period less than 28 working days. Respiratory absences have increased by 60% from Q1 to Q2. There was a spike in July which appears to be receding.

Both short-term and long-term absence rates are continually lower than the rates for the previous year.

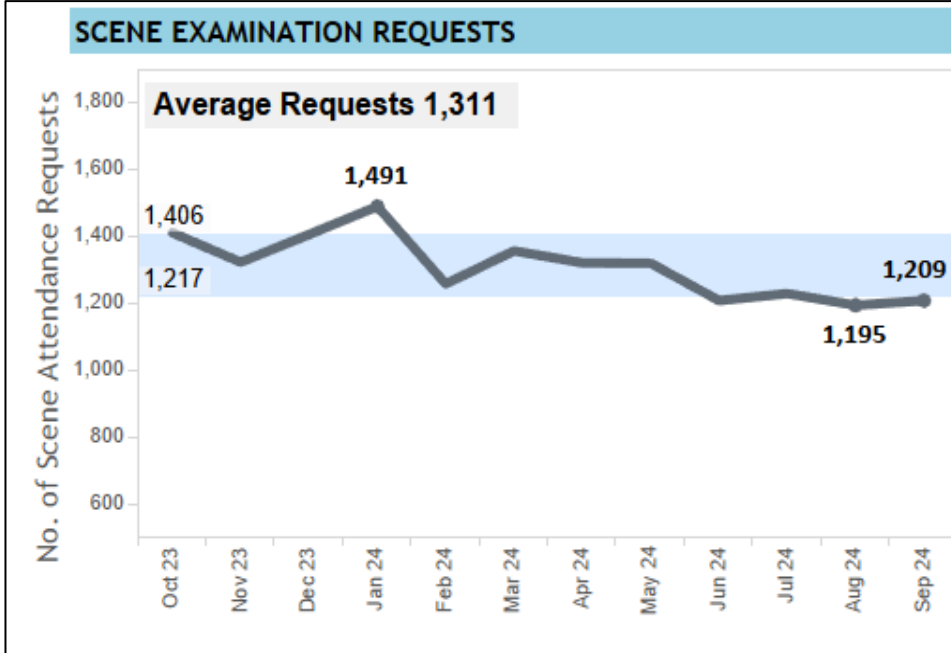


Forensic Services are continuing to submit Extension to Scope applications to UKAS which will be incorporated into the pending SU3 visit December 2024 by the UKAS audit team.

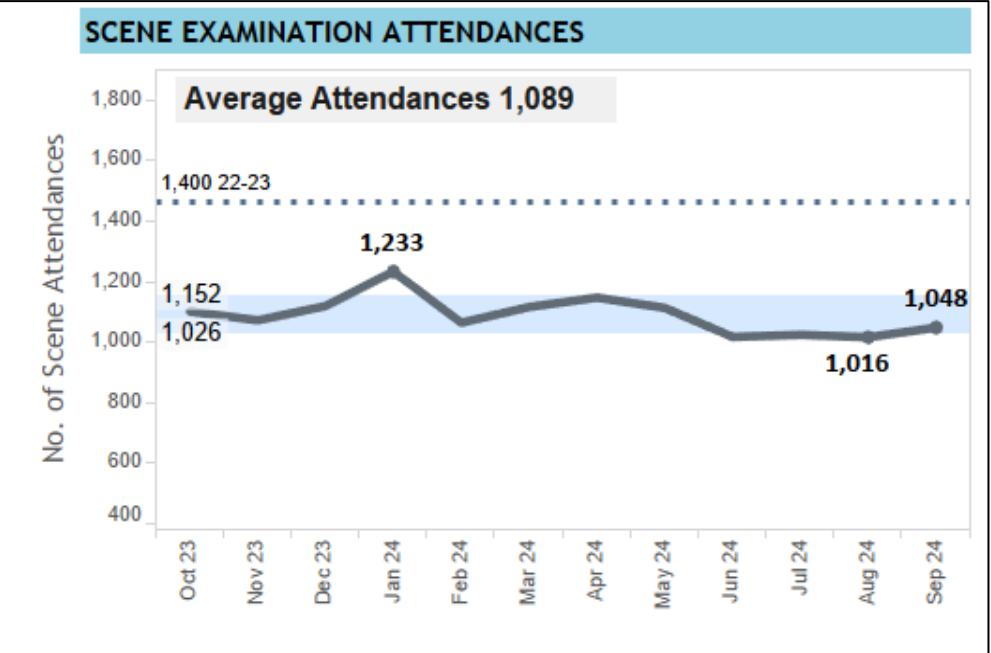
As previously reported progress on the UKAS requirements regarding GEN6 - 'Reference to accreditation and multilateral recognition signatory status by UKAS-accredited bodies' is progressing through discussion with Police Scotland, COPFS and PIRC. Agreement on an approach is critical for reporting to UKAS in forthcoming assessments.

Planning and preparations for the 2024/25 UKAS assessments is ongoing.

In Q2, there was a significant increase of 30 reported instances of Positive Feedback (previous Quarter 16, and comparative to Q2-2023 of 10) from various partners including Police Scotland and COPFS. There was one complaint related to Scientist availability, and two negative feedback reported this period by Police Scotland relating to the timeliness of scene attendance and a Production shipment condition issue. During this period 3,088 scenes were attended to assist putting the complaints/negative feedback into context. All feedback and complaints are reviewed, documented and actions identified.



The trend in the number of scene attendance requests raised by Police Scotland has begun to plateau. Further work is ongoing to understand the demand trend and how we can optimise value in relation to the examination of scenes.



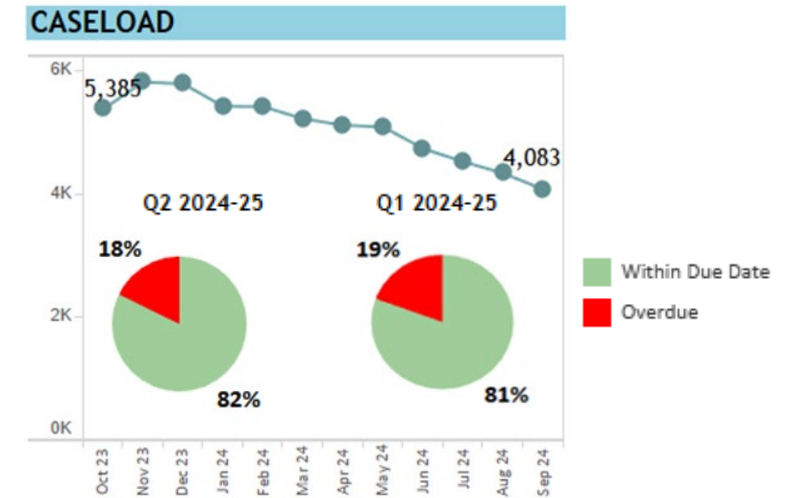
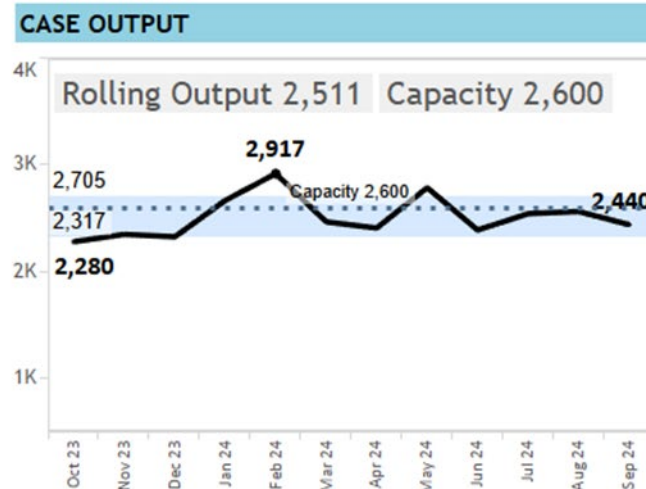
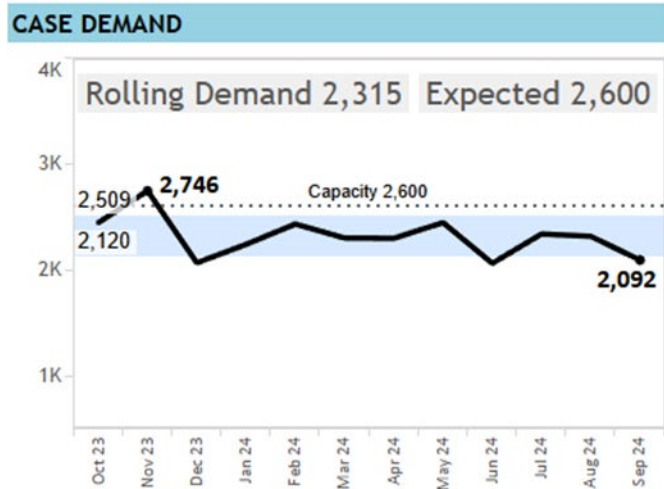
In Q2, crimes of violence, sexual crimes and non-crime categories are showing a below average demand compared to Q1. These crime types continue to exceed the monthly tasking timeliness target with delivery at 98%.

Crimes of Dishonesty (group 3) has also seen an overall decrease in tasking requests. This has assisted the improvement of compliance from 75% to 81% during Q2. Work is ongoing with our Partners to investigate the types of sample submission to improve timeliness and fit for purpose results.

A short life working group has been established to take forward the recommendations from the MET Review. The SLWG will also consider the formal assessment/benefits realisation review of the Access to Scene Deployment Project and the impact of the continuous improvements/changes that have been implemented since Day 1 to workflow across S&R Scenes and Tasking Unit.

Forensic Services is also providing short term support to British Transport Police in Scotland to provide additional reliance in their scene attendance and evidence recovery when required.

Laboratory casework demand remains broadly within our expected range. A lower demand has been seen in Chemistry & Documents, Firearms and Volume Crime. The latter reduction is in line with scene examination trend from the beginning of the calendar year. A reduction in overall demand has had an evident effect on caseload reduction. There has also been an improvement in the timeliness performance particularly in the priority 3 cases. The residual caseload is reducing with a slight reduction in overdue work (on internal target). It is important to note that this **does not mean** there is a risk of statutory time limits not being met.



The **demand** graph above represents the actual average monthly demand level at 2,315 cases. The blue shaded area indicates the expected natural variation trend. Any point out with these boundaries will be reviewed and any business risk highlighted. Engagement with Police Scotland to understand the reduction in demand is ongoing.

The **output** graph above represents the predicted monthly capacity level at 2,600 cases and the actual output achieved including outsourced activity.

The data shows that demand and output are broadly in balance across the organisation.

The above graph represents the **number of cases currently open and being worked on** in Forensic Services.

The pie chart represents the % of cases which meet our internal targets and those which have passed their delivery date. Delivery dates are calculated from the priority of the case which is assigned by COPFS or Police Scotland.

Service Delivery	Target	Current Quarter status	Previous Quarter status	Year to Date
Seven-day custody requests from customer	95%	↔ 97% (171) ●	99% (199) ●	98% (367) ●
COPFS – urgent delivery requests	85-95%	↑ 93% (238) ●	87% (218) ●	90% (450) ●
COPFS – all delivery requests	80-95%	↔ 85% (2,010) ●	83% (1,991) ●	84% (3,676) ●
PSoS – Priority 1 delivery requests	75-85%	↔ 93% (574) ●	94% (583) ●	93% (1,136) ●
PSoS – Priority 2 delivery requests	75-85%	↓ 49% (1,279) ●	57% (1,195) ●	53% (2,402) ●
PSoS – Priority 3 delivery requests	65%	↑ 59% (2,728) ●	46% (2,524) ●	53% (5,143) ●

Rag status key

- On track
- Issues being managed and monitored closely
- Issues in need of attention

Measured in calendar days

COPFS
Seven-day custody: typically, fewer than five days to complete.
Other COPFS requests: customer determined.

Police Scotland:

Priority 1: 7 days or less to complete.

Priority 2: 8 -60 days to complete.
Exception - VCU case target is 21 days

Priority 3: 60-150 days to complete.

Urgent and priority demands from COPFS and Police Scotland are continuing to be met with their timeliness relatively stable month on month.

Priority 2 case timeliness continues to slowly improve (as per caseload illustration in previous slide) as the case load in volume crime/group 3 work reduces. This has led to a short-term reduction in compliance (in this slide). The priority 2 category will be considered as part of the review of the performance framework.

Priority 3 case work predominantly sits within the analysis drugs capability which is continuing to improve output alongside a small decrease in demand, this is allowing a reduce in the backlog in this area.

Business area	2024-25 Q2	2024-25 Q1	2023-24 Q4
Search and Recovery Scenes			
Biology			
Volume Crime Unit			
Drugs			
Fingerprints			
Chemistry & Documents			
Drug Driving Section 4 & 5A turnarounds			
Criminal Toxicology			
Postmortem Toxicology			
Firearms			

This chart details the performance of all areas across Forensic Services and how we assess internally against the RAG status key.

Rag status key
On track
Issues being managed and monitored closely
Issues in need of attention

- **Scene examination** incident response within 24 hours continues to improve at 87% for the quarter against a target of 90% (89% in September). Proactive management within the tasking unit and deployment is seeing an improved service although demand is tracking below expected demand.
- **Volume crime team** has reduced its overall caseload by 46% from this time last year. Demand has decreased which provides an opportunity to improve the timeliness of delivery. Work within the operating model continues which may show this picture varying as new processes are implemented.
- **Drugs** output has exceeded demand for the fourth month in a row. The number of late completed cases it at a low of 8% showing improvement. Some short term impact in capacity in the drugs team is expected as some members of the team have secured roles in other areas of Forensic Services.
- **Drug driving** has had a technical issue during Q2 which has required further refinement to ensure the method improvements are resilient. Demand is within the higher range and with an impacted output the residual caseload has increased from August however additional outsourcing during this period has mitigated an impact in relation to statutory time limits.
- **Criminal Toxicology team** has continued to improve the non-drug-driving and drink-driving caseload. Resources continue to be deployed as appropriate between the key delivery areas for toxicology analysis to maximise performance when any technical issues arise.
- **Firearms demand** in Q2 has decreased by half in September. Taken together with an increased output the overall case load subsequently reduced, albeit the timeliness and number of late delivery of cases remains the same. The team continue to complete the prioritised cases as required by COPFS and Police Scotland.