



Agenda Item 3.1

Meeting	Forensic Services Committee
Date	3 February 2025
Location	Online
Title of Paper	Forensic Services Director's report
Presented By	Fiona Douglas, Director of Forensic Services
Recommendation to Members	For discussion
Appendix Attached	No

PURPOSE

To update members on the recent key activities across Forensic Services.

1. Updates

Drug driving

- 1.1 The number of drug-driving samples being submitted to Forensic Services continues to rise. Forensic Services and Police Scotland have an agreed capacity for the submission of Drug driving samples which forecasts a demand of 250 cases per month, stretching to 270 when required.
- 1.2 As detailed in the Drug Driving update paper (Paper 3.3), Forensic Services received 958 samples during Quarter 3: 352 in October; 312 in November; and 294 in December. As per the jointly agreed, signed, and published [Memorandum of Understanding for the Provision of Drug Driving Forensic Services in Scotland](#), there has been a sustained increase in demand for three months. As outlined at Section 10.5 of the MoU, this now requires formal engagement with the SPA Forensic Services Committee.
- 1.3 Forensic Services will be unable to meet the increasing drug-driving demands without the delivery of a sustainable long-term solution. The Long-Term Sustainable Model for Criminal Toxicology was approved, subject to funding being provided, at the SPA Resources Committee on 18th December 2024 with support from the Chair of the Forensic Services Committee.

Supporting the Shetland roadside testing pilot

- 1.4 The Director Forensic Services visited Shetland on 5th December 2024 with Chief Superintendent Hilary Sloan, Police Scotland Head of Road Policing, to support Police Scotland at the launch of the roadside drug testing pilot. Forensic Services are working closely with Police Scotland, as the force seeks to expand the use of Drug Wipes, so we can understand better their future requirements for drug-driving testing.
- 1.5 We are committed to support justice in Scotland and keep our communities safe and protected from drug drivers and the danger they cause on our roads. Drug drivers in Shetland are now more likely to be caught as roadside testing kits are rolled out to local policing officers.
- 1.6 Training is being delivered as part of the pilot to give local policing officers the ability to use Drug Wipe – a mouth swab drug detection kit – which will give an instant result to check for cannabis and cocaine. If the test is positive, drivers are then taken to a police

station for a blood test which can detect other substances. It is then sent away to a laboratory and if appropriate, a case prepared for court.

Finance update

- 1.4 At the end of Quarter 3, Forensic Services are currently forecasting an overspend of around £300,000 on the revenue budget and an underspend of £200,000 capital by the end of the year. These are detailed in the Quarter 3 Finance Report (3.5) for this meeting.
- 1.5 While the current predicted overspend represents around 0.6% of the £44.7 million revenue budget, significant steps have already been taken to reduce this overspend to try to ensure Forensic Services are back on budget by the financial year end.

Forensic Services Parliamentary reception

- 1.6 On Wednesday 20 November 2024, the Forensic Services Senior Management Team, Scottish Police Authority Board members, and colleagues took part in a Parliamentary reception at the Scottish Parliament in Holyrood.
- 1.7 The aim of the event was to build awareness, understanding, and advocacy for Forensic Services in Scotland among parliamentarians and policymakers and to highlight the value of Forensic Services to the criminal justice sector in Scotland. We were joined by Scottish Police Authority Chair Martyn Evans, Vice Chair and Chair of the People Committee Fiona McQueen CBE, Forensic Services Committee Chair Paul Edie, Chief Executive Lynn Brown OBE.
- 1.8 Audrey Nicoll, the MSP for Aberdeen South and North Kincardine and chair of the Scottish Parliament's Criminal Justice Committee, who was the host for the evening's event, said: "In Scotland, the provision of forensic services is a unique crime scene to court model, and unlike in other parts of the UK, our forensic services are publicly owned and run. We hope this evening is an opportunity to highlight the role and value that Forensic Services delivers to the criminal justice system, and in doing so, showcase the breadth of services provided."
- 1.9 **UKAS accreditation maintained for 26th consecutive year**
- 1.10 UKAS completed their ISO 17025 accreditation assessment programme in Howden Hall, Edinburgh, on 5th December 2024 after more than five weeks of assessment activity at our five laboratory

sites, which had begun at Rushton Court, Dundee, on 4th November. Forensic Services maintained our accreditation status for the 26th consecutive year.

- 1.11 There were more than 75 days of UKAS assessment time, covering all accredited areas, as well as an additional eight days of new extensions to our accredited scope. Feedback from the UKAS assessment team was very positive, thanking everyone that they met for their professionalism, openness, and the high-level competence of staff.
- 1.12 The UKAS requirements regarding GEN6 - '*Reference to accreditation and multilateral recognition signatory status by UKAS-accredited bodies*' with full implementation of the GEN6 requirements are now being implemented after discussions with COPFS.

Ethical use of biometric data

- 1.13 Dr Brian Plastow, the Scottish Biometrics Commissioner, wrote to the Director of Forensic Services on 8th January 2025 saying: "From independent review of the available evidence, I am satisfied that the SPA Forensic Services are currently using biometric data in a lawful, effective, and ethical manner."
- 1.14 He added: "I am also satisfied that the SPA Forensic Services is currently complying with the statutory [Code of Practice](#) approved by the Parliament and Scottish Ministers on 16 November 2022."

Westminster Forensic Commission team visit Gartcosh

- 1.15 Four members of the Westminster Commission on Forensic Science visited the Scottish Crime Campus, Gartcosh, in January 2025. They are looking at the provision of forensic science in England and Wales and were interested understating more about the delivery model used by Forensic Services in Scotland. They spent a day being briefed by member of the Senior Management Team as well as touring the laboratories with a Lead Forensic Scientist.
- 1.16 The Westminster Commission on Forensic Science was set up in March 2023 by the Westminster All-Party Parliamentary Group on Miscarriages of Justice and is due to publish its finding in the Spring 2025.

1.17 TV programmes focus on Cold Case forensics

1.18 There have been several television programmes in the past few months highlighting the work on cold cases by Forensic Services staff. BBC recently broadcast *Murder Case - The hunt for Mary McLaughlin's Killer* where Senior Forensic Scientist Joanne Cochrane discussed how new DNA profiling technology was used to solve the 1984 murder of Mary McLaughlin, 58, at her home in Glasgow.

1.19 At the end of last year Forensic Lead Chris Gannicliffe discussed the 1978 murder of Dr Brenda Page on BBC1 *Expert Witness* programme. In another show in same the series, he was interviewed about the 1976 murders of Renee and Andrew Macrae. Forensic Lead Nighean Stevenson appeared on a Sky Crime programme *The Murder in the Deli*, looking at the murder of 15-year-old Paige Doherty and the forensics used in finding her killer.

2. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

2.1 There are no financial implications in this report.

3. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no personnel implications in this report.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no legal implications in this report.

5. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no reputational implications in this report.

6. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no social implications in this report.

7. COMMUNITY IMPACT

7.1 There are no community implications in this report.

8. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no equality implications in this report.

9. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no environmental implications in this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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