



Meeting	Forensic Services Committee
Date	3rd February 2025
Location	Online
Title of Paper	Forensic Services Performance Report – Quarter 3 2024/25
Presented By	Vicki Morton, Chief Operating Officer, Forensic Services
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached	Forensic Services Performance Report Q3 2024/25

PURPOSE

To present Forensic Services Performance Report, Q3 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 Q3 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 – Q3 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 3



OFFICIAL

Business area	Page	Business area	Page
Executive summary	3	Our People – Short- and long-term absence	10
Balanced Scorecard summary	4	Quality compliance	11
Business Plan compliance	5	Overview – Search & Recovery Scenes	12
Performance Framework status	6-7	Overview – Laboratory delivery	13
Our People – Health and Safety	8	Delivery of the Memorandum of Understanding	14
Our People – Working days lost	9	Internal performance status	15

Performance continues to be strong for urgent casework for both Police Scotland and COPFS and there has been a steady fall in the caseload across Forensic Services from 5,430 to 3,465 during the past 12 months.

Due to a reduction in overall demand, it has been possible to improve the timeliness in the longer (Priority 3) target date cases. An increase in the overall number of shorter turnaround time priority work has had resource implications for the Priority 2 capacity.

Absence levels have increased, in line with seasonal variations with rises in viral infections and respiratory illnesses. Forensic Services absence levels continue to be lower than those in Police Scotland.

The UKAS yearly surveillance visits have been completed and these included two scientific extensions to our scope of accreditation. One relates to the opening of the two new laboratory facilities in Edinburgh and Aberdeen for examinations in the enhancement of marks. The other was the validation of the Drugs HPLC Quant methodology in the Scottish Crime Campus and Dundee.

The recruitment of additional Forensic Examiners in the SCC and Forensic Analysts posts in Dundee and SCC has been concluded. Once inducted and trained, these staff will assist with the transition of delivering Acquisitive crime from two, rather than one, laboratory site. This moves the New Operating Model implementation closer to completion.

The self-assessment for the compliance with the Scottish Biometrics Commissioner's Code of Practice was submitted for review. The SBC Commissioner has confirmed he is satisfied that we are currently using biometric data in a lawful, effective, and ethical manner.

Our Partners	
5-year demand forecasting	●
Implement the new Performance Framework reporting	●
Deliver a Joint Biometrics Strategy with PS	●

Our People	
Implement an apprenticeship pathway	●
Proactive management of long-term absence return	●
Embed the new management structure	●

Our Processes	
Develop a long-term Digital & Data plan	●
Deliver the refreshed Criminal Toxicology improvement plan	●
Deliver the Quality Improvement plan	●





















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	●

RAG status key
Completed
Started / on track
Started / issues being managed and monitored closely
Started / issues in need of attention
















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	5	2	0
Our Resources	0	4	1	0
Our Processes	0	6	2	0
Our Partners	0	6	1	0


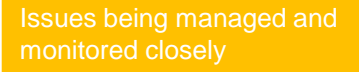

	Activity	STATUS Q3 2024-25	STATUS Q2 2024-25	Year to Date	Comments
Strategic Outcome 1 Our people are supported through a positive working environment, enabling them to provide excellent forensic services	Absence rate				Absence rates are within the expected range for the seasonal fluctuations
	Reporting of injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 - HSE				No RIDDORs reported in Q3. 1 x RIDDOR in Q2.
	Management Training				Ongoing and on track
Strategic Outcome 2 Forensic Services are sustainable, adaptable and prepared for future challenges	Compliance to Business Plan				No current emerging issues
	Compliance to Operating Model – budget constraints withstanding				Further posts have been recruited and are in training to transition the Acquisitive cases to the split hub. Some posts are unbudgeted and unoccupied.

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 Q3 2024-25	STATUS Q2 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 have concluded.
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 Summer 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

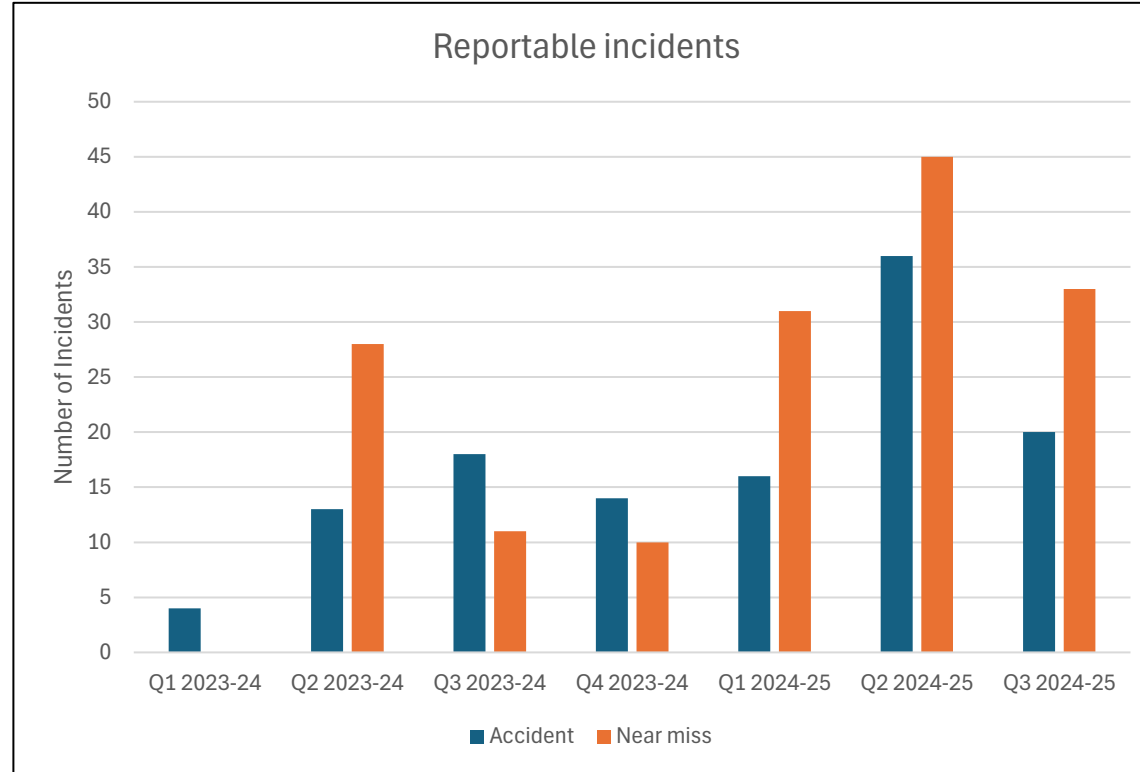
Performance data has been assessed as amber as there are internal areas of Forensic Services which are being managed and monitored closely, as noted later in this report. The assessment against the Performance Framework provides assurance that the key internal processes to set, deliver, monitor, and report on our strategic priorities are effective. We strive for continuous improvement, as set out in our Business Plan for 2024-2026.

Accident/Near Miss statistical trend

All staff in Forensic Services are encouraged to report near miss incidents before any situation becomes an accident.

Staff Health & Safety champions have been appointed to join a working group to instil a positive culture of improvement and ownership of related matters and actions.

The introduction of a local exhaust ventilation (LEV) system - due to a change in chemical testing requirement - has resulted in issues being raised via the reportable incident policy in both Q2 and Q3. Police Scotland Estates and Forensic Services are both engaged with the installers to rebalance the air flow between the whole building and the LEV system in SCC. Similar works are in design for the Dundee laboratory, which have been delayed as a result of retrospective learning.



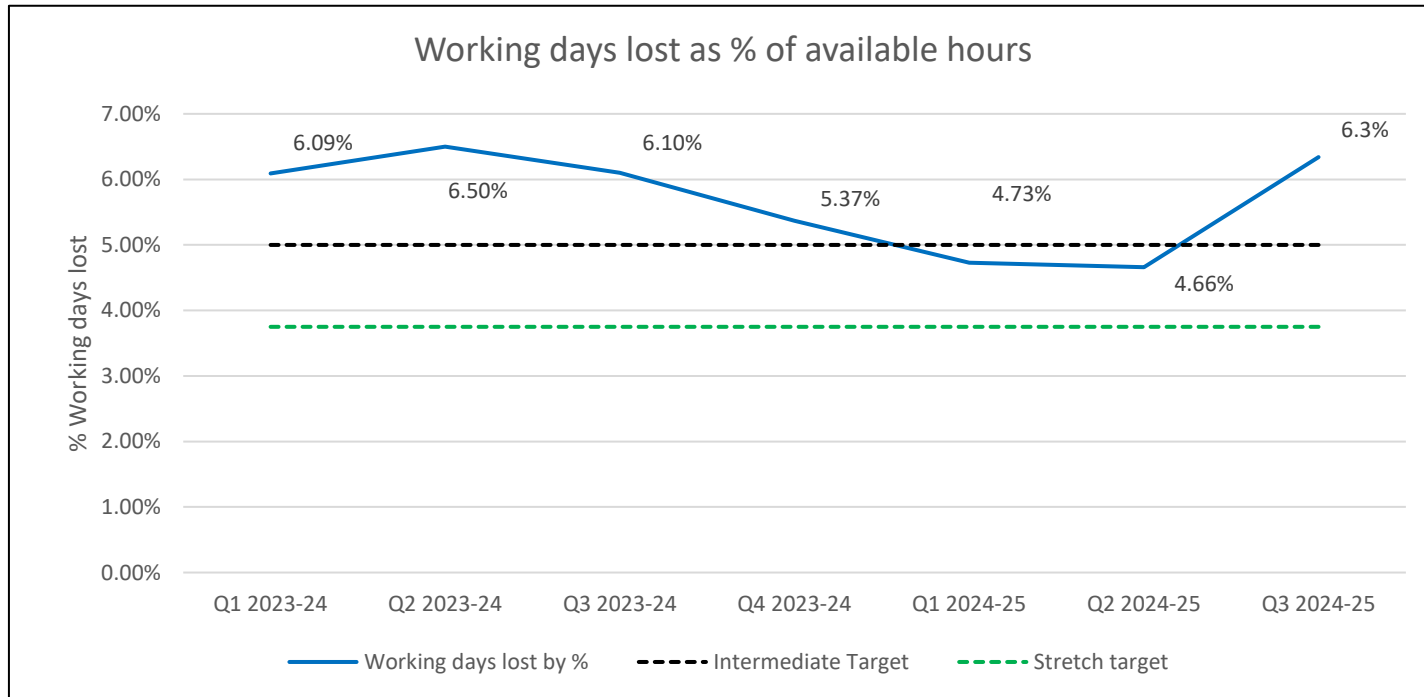
Risk Status: Low

Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations - Zero in Q3.

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%)

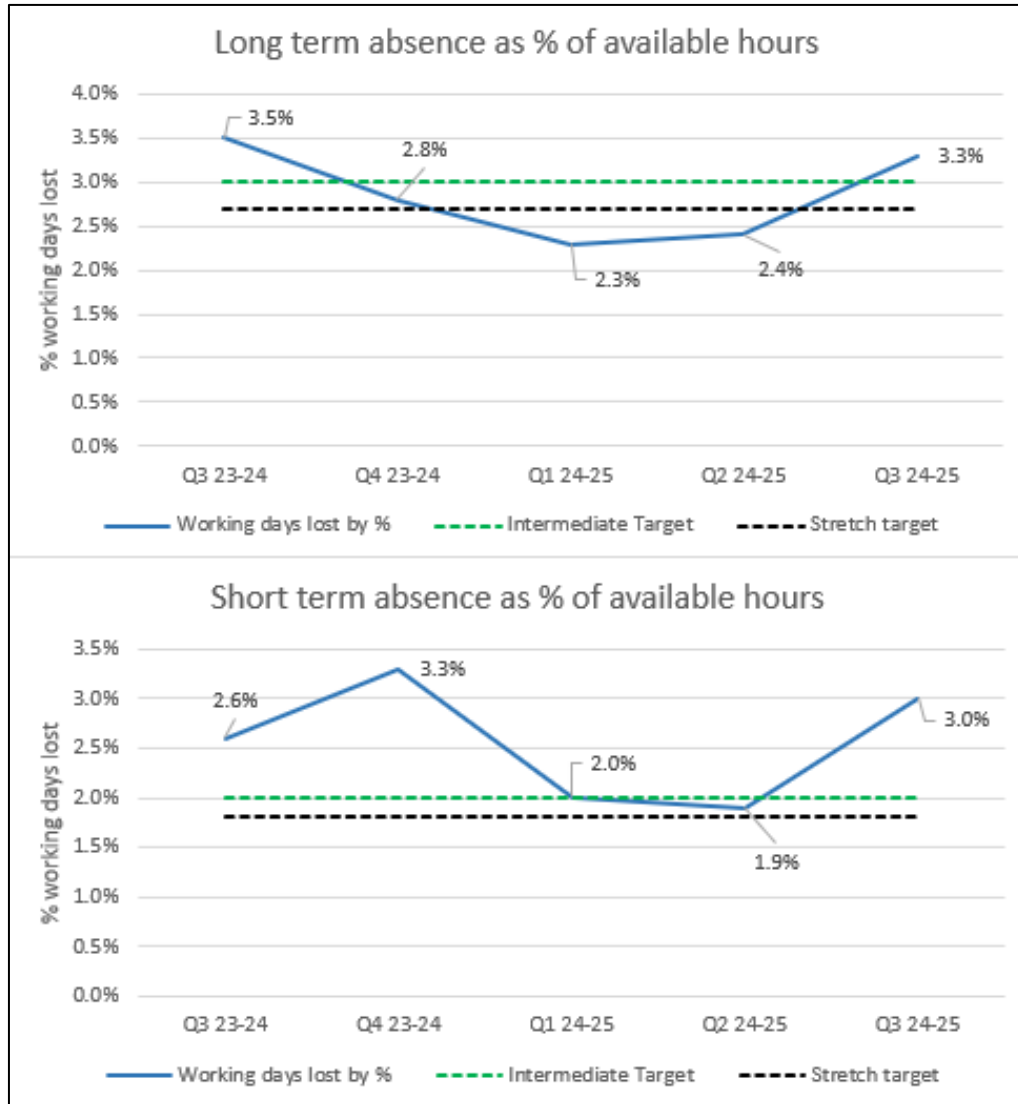
Absence includes health, injury, work-related issues, bereavement, and other reasons.

Data from Q2 to Q3;

- ~ 50% increase in respiratory absences and migraine absences.
- ~ 90% increase in viral infections (4 to 46 days)

Covid has been registered as less than 1% of any absence recorded.

The number of working days lost has increased due to the expected seasonable illnesses (and consequential) absences - as shown on the short-term absence graph. This is in line with the same period last year. However, tracks below that within PSoS.



LTA target (stretch)
3% (2.7%)

Last FY Av. 3.4%
YTD Av. 2.9%

Long term absence (LTA) is defined as any period over 28 working days. Currently both the target and the stretch target have not been met this quarter. A total of 35% and 16.5% of all absences relate to Psychological disorders and Musculo-skeletal respectively.

Some of the miscellaneous reasons between Q2 and Q3 have been re-categorised and a direct comparison is difficult.

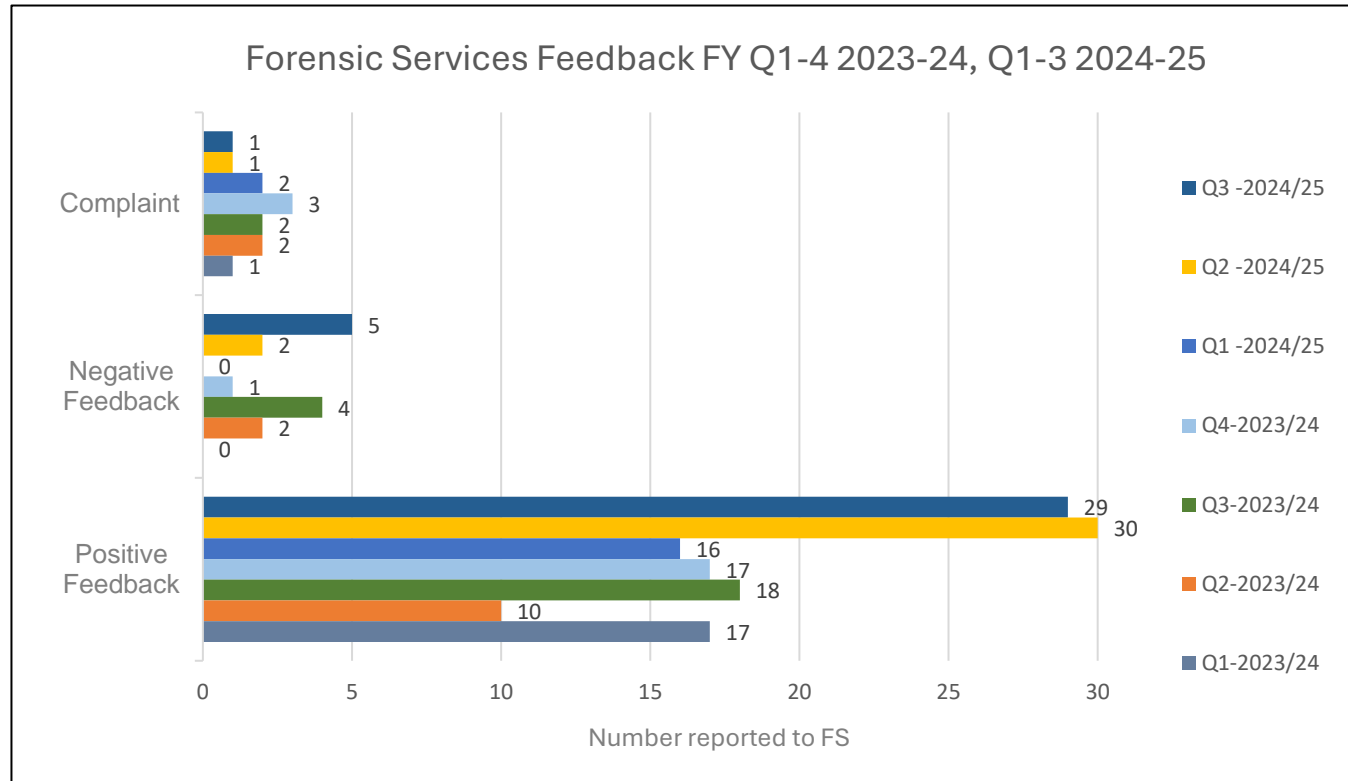
STA target (stretch)
2% (1.8%)

Last FY Av. 2.6%
YTD Av. 2.3%

Short-term absence (STA) is any period less than 28 working days.

50% increase in respiratory illnesses from Q2 to Q3.

100% of all viral infections recorded are for a period of less than 28 days as was the case in Q2.

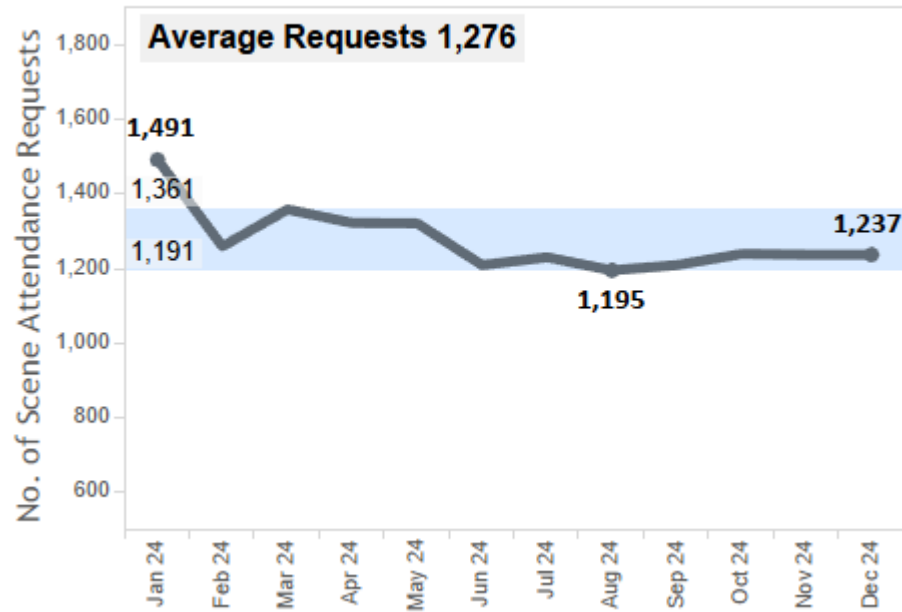


Forensic Services undertook our SU3 UKAS assessment programme through November into December 2024. UKAS reported that it had been a very positive assessment, and that FS staff had been very open, honest and supportive of the process.

As previously reported, progress on the UKAS requirements regarding GEN6 - *'Reference to accreditation and multilateral recognition signatory status by UKAS-accredited bodies'* is with full implementation of the GEN6 requirements now being implemented after further discussions with COPFS. Planning for the 2025-2026 UKAS re-assessment programme has already begun, with dates in October and November 2025 reserved.

In Q3, there was another significant number of reported instances of Positive Feedback, with 29 just short of last quarter by one. This feedback was from various partners including Police Scotland and COPFS. There was one complaint related to Scene Examiner availability, and five negative feedback reported this period by Police Scotland relating to the timeliness and availability of scene attendance. All negative feedback and complaints are reviewed, documented and actions identified for improvement action where necessary and required.

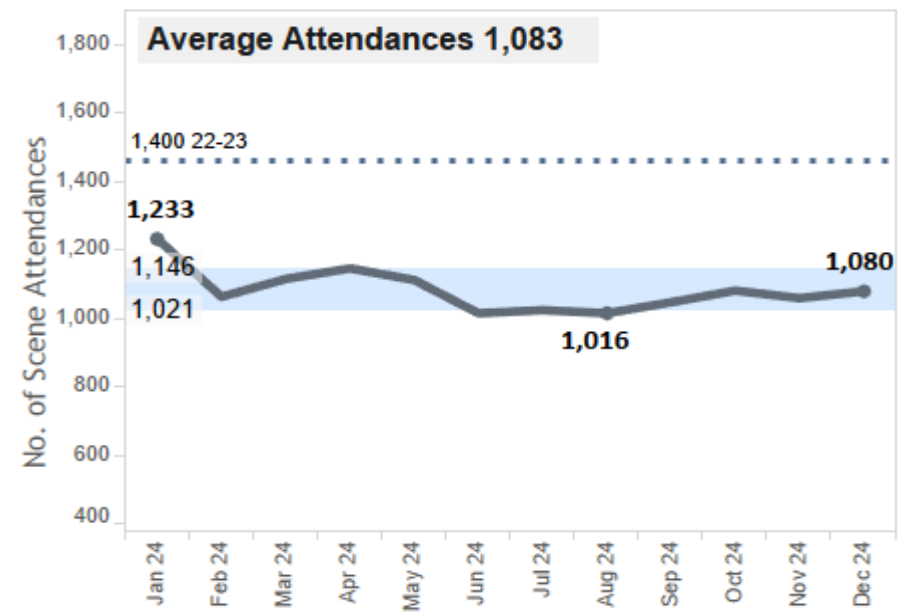
SCENE EXAMINATION REQUESTS



The trend in the number of scene attendance requests is being explored with Police Scotland.

Further work is ongoing internally to streamline the end-to-end process for attendance.

SCENE EXAMINATION ATTENDANCES



In Q3, there has been a slight increase in requests for scene attendance, principally Group 1 – Crimes of violence and Group 8 (Non-crime - incidents related to death). Between Q2 and Q3 there has been a reduction in request cancellations made by the Forensic Services Tasking Unit from around 19% to 15%, which has also led to a slight rise in attendances.

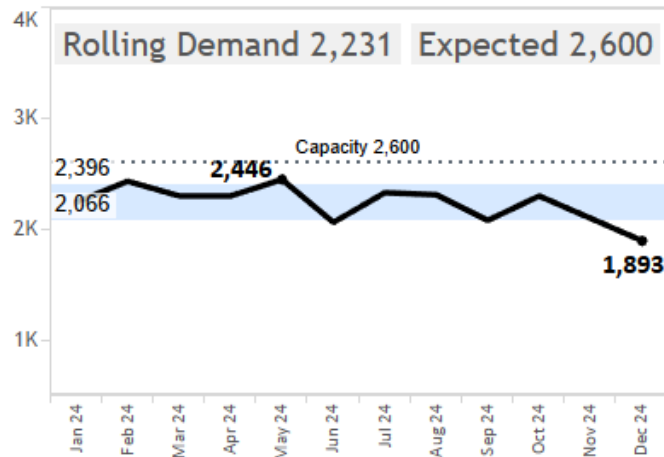
Attendance within 24 hours, or an agreed/scheduled appointment was 88% compliant in Q3 (vs 90% target) which is in line with Q2, in spite of challenges from seasonal illnesses and slightly increased demand.

Timeliness of attendance for Serious Crime (Grp 1, 2 and 8) remains static at 96% compliance (above the 90% target). There continues to be focus on the more challenging areas (Group 3 housebreaking and scenes linked to vehicles/road traffic).

Overview – Laboratory delivery

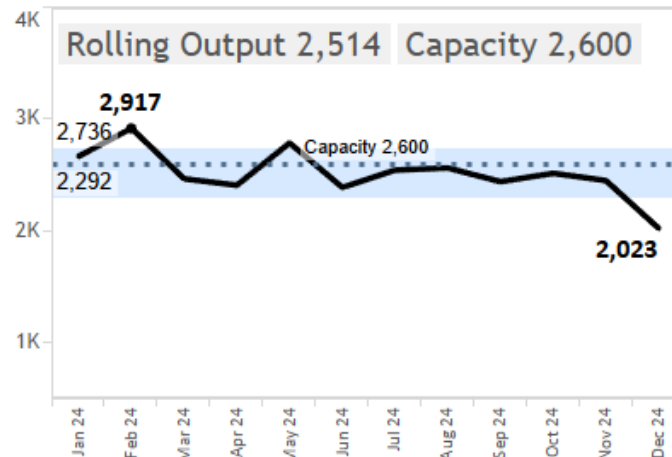
There were around 400 fewer case submissions in Q3 than Q2, which could be either a seasonal fluctuation or an ongoing overall reduction in submissions. However, the demand trend has reduced over the past three years and Q3 is showing the lowest demand during this period. Group 3 – Crimes of Dishonesty has had a sustained demand reduction in both crime stains from scene examinations and drugs submissions. The result of these reductions has helped drive an improvement in timeliness for Fingerprints and Drugs. Volume crime performance has remained static because of staff promotions/movement to other posts which will be mitigated through recruitment and training.

CASE DEMAND



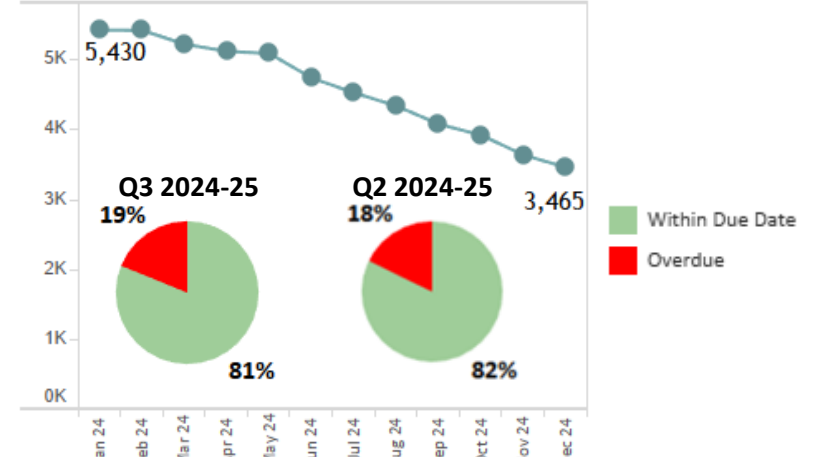
The **demand** graph above represents the actual average monthly demand level at 2,231 cases. The blue shaded area indicates the expected natural variation trend. Any point out with these boundaries will be reviewed and any business risk highlighted. Engagement with Police Scotland to understand the reduction in demand is ongoing.

CASE OUTPUT



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.

CASELOAD



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%	↔ 98% (150) ●	97% (171) ●	98% (516) ●
COPFS – urgent delivery requests	85-95%	↔ 91% (262) ●	93% (238) ●	90% (700) ●
COPFS – all delivery requests	80-95%	↔ 82% (1,869) ●	85% (2,010) ●	83% (5,138) ●
PSoS – Priority 1 delivery requests	75-85%	↔ 93% (614) ●	93% (574) ●	93% (1,726) ●
PSoS – Priority 2 delivery requests	75-85%	↔ 48% (949) ●	49% (1,279) ●	52% (3,280) ●
PSoS – Priority 3 delivery requests	65%	↑ 81% (2,411) ●	59% (2,728) ●	62% (7,461) ●

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 in each quarter. The reporting criteria for Priority 2 category will be considered as part of the review of the performance framework as it currently spans multiple exclusive targets. Priority 3 case work compliance has improved and this due in part due to a reduction in demand in RRA drugs cases and a continued improvement in their overdue cases.

Business area	2024-25 Q3	2024-25 Q2	2024-25 Q1
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. There are ongoing improvement activities within Search & Recovery (Scenes) and in partnership with Police Scotland. Approximately 50% of all cases are within serious crime groups 1, 2 and 8.
- **Volume crime (DNA analysis) team** has reduced its overall caseload by 46% from this time last year. The decrease in demand 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 is consistently exceeding demand each quarter. The RRA case load is at the lowest level since July 2023. COPFS levels remain constant.
- **Criminal Toxicology (Drug driving) team** delivered 99% of S5A cases on time for December. The delivery of the small number of priority 2 cases – Sec 4, is not compliant to target. These are being actively managed and internally the team are close to compliance. Since August demand has continually increased and in October hit a record demand of 420 cases. Additional outsourcing will be necessary and increase the risk of potential time bar of cases.
- **Firearms** continues to work to its recovery plan and has seen a further reduction in caseload with monthly capacity exceeding demand. Much of the caseload is within the Priority 3 category, where there was a reduction in the demand between November and December - resulting in a 50% increase in compliance from November to December.