

**SCOTTISH POLICE
AUTHORITY**

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| Meeting | Forensic Services Committee |
| Date | 20th April 2020 |
| Location | Teleconference |
| Title of Paper | COVID-19 Impact Report |
| Item number | 9 |
| Presented By | Tom Nelson |
| Recommendation to Members | For Discussion |
| Appendix Attached | No |

PURPOSE

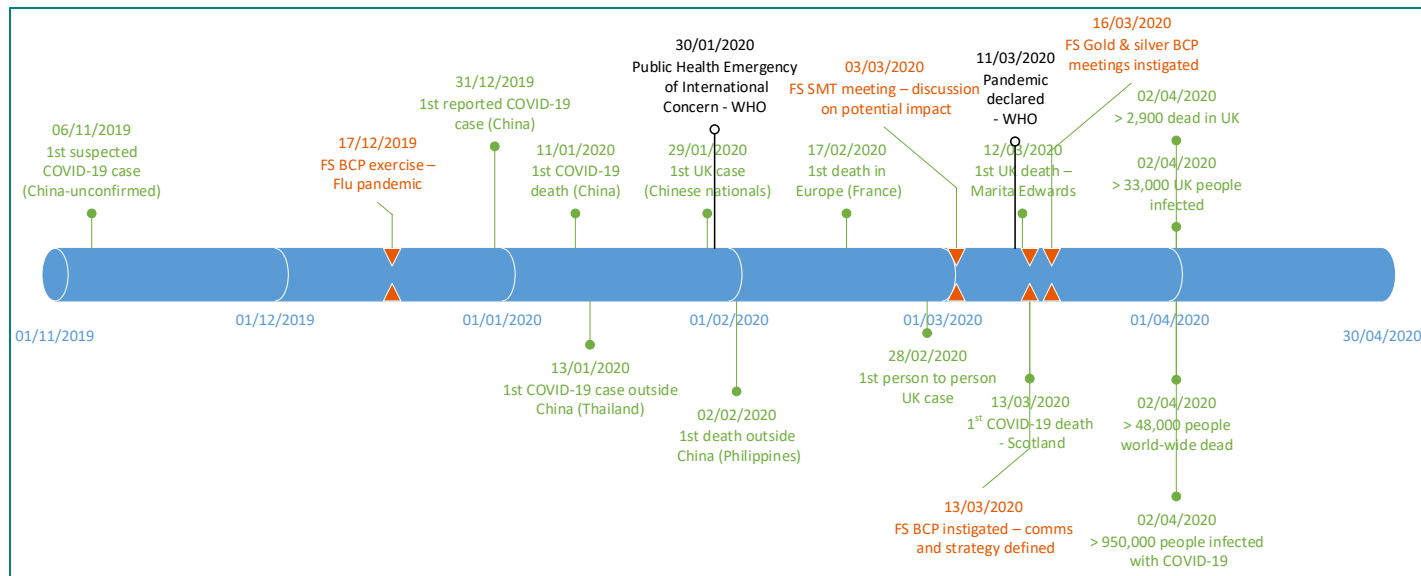
To present Forensic Services response to the COVID 19 outbreak.

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 – The Journey So Far

1. BACKGROUND - Pandemic timeline



1.1. This document is to provide the **Forensic Services Committee** with an overview of the 'Journey so far' with regard to Forensic Services response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic which originated in late Dec 2019 and led to the World Health Organisation (WHO) declaring a Public Health Emergency of International Concern just one month later.

1.2. Senior Management at Forensic Services began preparations and planning for Coronavirus COVID-19 at a FS SMT meeting on **04 Mar 2020**. This came after the first person-to-person infection case within the UK. Initial concerns related to the reported likelihood of 20-50% of people being affected and the impact that this would have on resilience and service delivery. Tom Nelson (TN), Director of Forensic Services requested that a readiness group be created to monitor and feedback weekly to the SMT.

1.3. The following week, COVID-19 readiness was discussed, including a review of the recently updated Forensic Services Business Continuity Plan, as well as the output of a desktop exercise carried out in Dec 2019 based around a Flu pandemic. Actions taken included Operations Managers being tasked with identifying any staff who may be returning from annual leave in 'high risk' areas.

2. FURTHER DETAIL ON THE REPORT TOPIC

- 2.1. On Mon 16 Mar 2020, the 'Strategic Aims and Objectives for the Management of the impact of Covid-19 on Forensic Services in Scotland' were agreed by the SMT:

Strategic Objective 1 – Maximise Public Safety through maintaining an appropriate response to incidents

- Ensure operational response is maximised with the available capacity across Forensic Services
- Plan resources strategically based on the best evidence to maximise available capacity throughout the period of the incident
- Prioritise work in partnership and alignment with other agencies ensuring that the Forensic Services response is appropriate within wider justice system constraints

Strategic Objective 2 – Safeguard the Health, Wellbeing and Safety of our staff

- Ensure that all public health guidance is implemented effectively across Forensic Services and that appropriate checks are in place
- Ensure that the welfare of staff and their personal circumstances is taken into account within proportional decision making
- Ensure that all managers and staff are clear of their responsibilities throughout the period of the incident
- Implement all policy and procedures consistently and effectively across all areas of Forensic Services

Strategic Objective 3 – Provide appropriate communications to reassure staff in line with public health guidance

- Develop and implement an effective communication plan to keep staff updated at routine and relevant intervals with appropriate information
- Ensure good communications between the gold, silver and bronze groups at all times
- Link communications plans with key partners, SPA and Police Scotland to ensure consistency in content and timing of key messages
- Ensure staff confidence in the Forensic Services response

Strategic Objective 4 – Ensure business continuity arrangements are in place within Forensic Services to manage the response and ensure an efficient return to normal operations in due course

- Ensure that a clear and appropriate command structure is in place for Forensic Services and operating effectively

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- Ensure consistent and proportionate decision making is in place to ensure effective prioritisation of demands
 - Ensure clear documentation of decisions and costs associated to the business continuity response
 - Maximise and protect critical supplies and services throughout the period of the incident
- 2.2. Consideration was also given to the desired and potential outcomes of Forensic Services response and implementation of these objectives.
- 2.3. In order to achieve these objectives a series of command groups were established in line with the Forensic Services Business Continuity Plan, with alignment to the Police Scotland Gold Strategy for Operation Talla.
- 2.4. The Gold Group, chaired by Tom Nelson, was held daily until Wed 1st April and now every two days. This comprised Forensic Services SMT and Gordon Brown, HR Business Partner, plus union representation. The Silver Group chair also attends the Gold group to update on operational issues relating to demand and staffing levels plus points of escalation requiring Gold input and decisions. A Decision Log is maintained to record all issues raised and their resolution. This group also receives feedback from the Director from his attendance at Police Scotland's Silver Divisional Commander Group.
- 2.5. The Silver Group is chaired by Alastair Patience (Operations Manager, Fingerprints) comprises senior management representatives from all Forensic Services disciplines with input from others such as Lead Scientists and the Forensic Gateway. In addition, there is input from the Forensic Services representative on Police Scotland's Op Talla H&S Group.
- 2.6. Operational Bronze Groups are also active, engaged in delivering the operational objectives, responding to demand levels from COPFS and Police Scotland with appropriate level of site-based staff.
- 2.7. Given the quantity, complexity and rate of change of information during this period one of the top priorities is to keep staff regularly updated during such a period of uncertainty. To this end, the Director issues a daily staff bulletin which summarises relevant information and includes reminders of the availability of services for ongoing staff welfare.
- 2.8. Achieving and maintaining appropriate service levels is being achieved in different ways by the different functions however there are regular interactions between teams to ensure a comprehensive and timely response to partner requirements.

2.9. Maintaining contact with staff and ensuring continued line management has been a new challenge to all in Forensic Services however a recent audit of staff by the Head of Quality has given the SMT assurance that all staff are receiving appropriate and timely information and having frequent interaction with their line manager.

2.10. The Director has now initiated forward planning to manage the challenges of remote working and to anticipate future partner requirements. The main themes are:

- Home Working
- Phase 2 – The New Norm
- Major projects and legislative conformance.

2.11. At present, without further information and timescales on the duration of the current lock-down and the progress of the pandemic, Forensic Services is planning to ensure maintenance of appropriate service levels to our key partners, attending appropriate scenes of crime and keeping staff safe while acknowledging our Key Worker status and conforming to Government guidelines.

2.12. The strategic objectives have been reviewed to ensure continued relevancy and will continue to be reviewed on a regular basis.

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 from home where appropriate.

3.1.2. Additional cleaning and personal protective equipment for staff.

3.2. These costs are being captured separately and will be reported at the end of the next quarter.

4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

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

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

Members are asked to note the content of the report and the continuing work in this area.