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| Meeting | Forensic Services Committee |
| Date | 6th August 2024 |
| Location | MS Teams |
| Title of Paper | Forensic Services Performance Report – Quarter 1 2024/25 |
| Presented By | Vicki Morton, Chief Operating Officer, Forensic Services |
| Recommendation to Members | For Discussion |
| Appendix Attached | Forensic Services Performance Report Q1 2024/25 |

PURPOSE

To present Forensic Services Performance Report, Q1 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 Q1 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 – Q1 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 1



OFFICIAL

| Business area | Page | Business area | Page |
|---|-------------|--|--------------|
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The New Operating Model structure was implemented as planned during Q1. This required a significant amount of work over many years to deliver and all staff have started in their new posts within the new structure which is aligned to the three capabilities: Search and Recovery; Analysis; and Reporting – all underpinned by Operational Support and Quality.

Both short-term and long-term absence rates are considerably lower than the rates for the previous year after a series of initiatives as part of the organisational change were implemented across Forensic Services.

The two-year Forensic Services Business Plan, which was presented to the most recent [SPA Forensic Services Committee meeting](#), is in the first quarter with all sections showing a green status. We will report the RAG status against the plan over the coming two years as the work develops.

The crime group profiles continue to show capacity and demand are aligned in most areas – showing a green status for all crime groups. While there have been modest improvements in service delivery compliance in drugs, Search and Recovery Scenes have started to show more sustained performance improvements.

There has also been lots of positive feedback recorded by Quality, where compliance has also improved.

Forensic Services is working closely with Police Scotland's Health & Safety team to review the Health & Safety Committees structures across all our working areas after concerns were raised by colleagues in Rushton Court Laboratory, Dundee.

| | OUR PEOPLE | OUR RESOURCES | OUR PROCESSES | OUR PARTNERS |
|---|------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| COMPLETED | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| STARTED / ON TRACK | 8 | 5 | 8 | 7 |
| STARTED / ACTIVITY IS BEING CLOSELY MONITORED | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| STARTED / ACTIVITY IS IN NEED OF ATTENTION | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |


















The Forensic Services business plan for 2024-2026 has been published and is in the early progress stages.






Police Scotland Digital Division to deliver a fit-for-purpose networking capability across Forensic Services, with an initial focus on Post-Mortem Toxicology at the Moorepark Laboratory- engagement is ongoing.


















The development of the Forensic Services Core Operating System (COS) will be crucial to moving from EMS to a new solution which will provide paperless capabilities.

| | Activity | STATUS Q1 2024-25 | STATUS Q4 2023-24 | 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 |  |  |  | Both short-term and long-term absence rates are considerably lower than the rates for the previous year. |
| | Reporting of injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 - HSE |  |  |  | No RIDDOR incidents reported. |
| | 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 – first quarter - On track |
| | Compliance to Operating Model – budget constraints withstanding |  |  |  | Operating model changes completed 1 st April 2024, with further embedding of new ways of working continuing. |


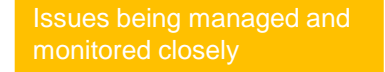

| Rag status key |
|--|
|  On track |
|  Issues being managed and monitored closely |
|  Issues in need of attention |

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

There have been no further RIDDOR incidents recorded since Q4 2023-24.

| | Activity | STATUS Q1 2024-25 | STATUS Q4 2023-24 | 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 18) |
| | Capital and Revenue plan (Inc. efficiencies) |  |  |  | Revenue is on track for a balanced budget. Capex spend has begun for new financial year 24/25. |
| Strategic Outcome 3 Forensic Services deliver high-quality, ethical services; and leads to advance forensic science | Compliance to UKAS ISO17025 |  |  |  | Accreditation status maintained. |
| 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 |
| | 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.

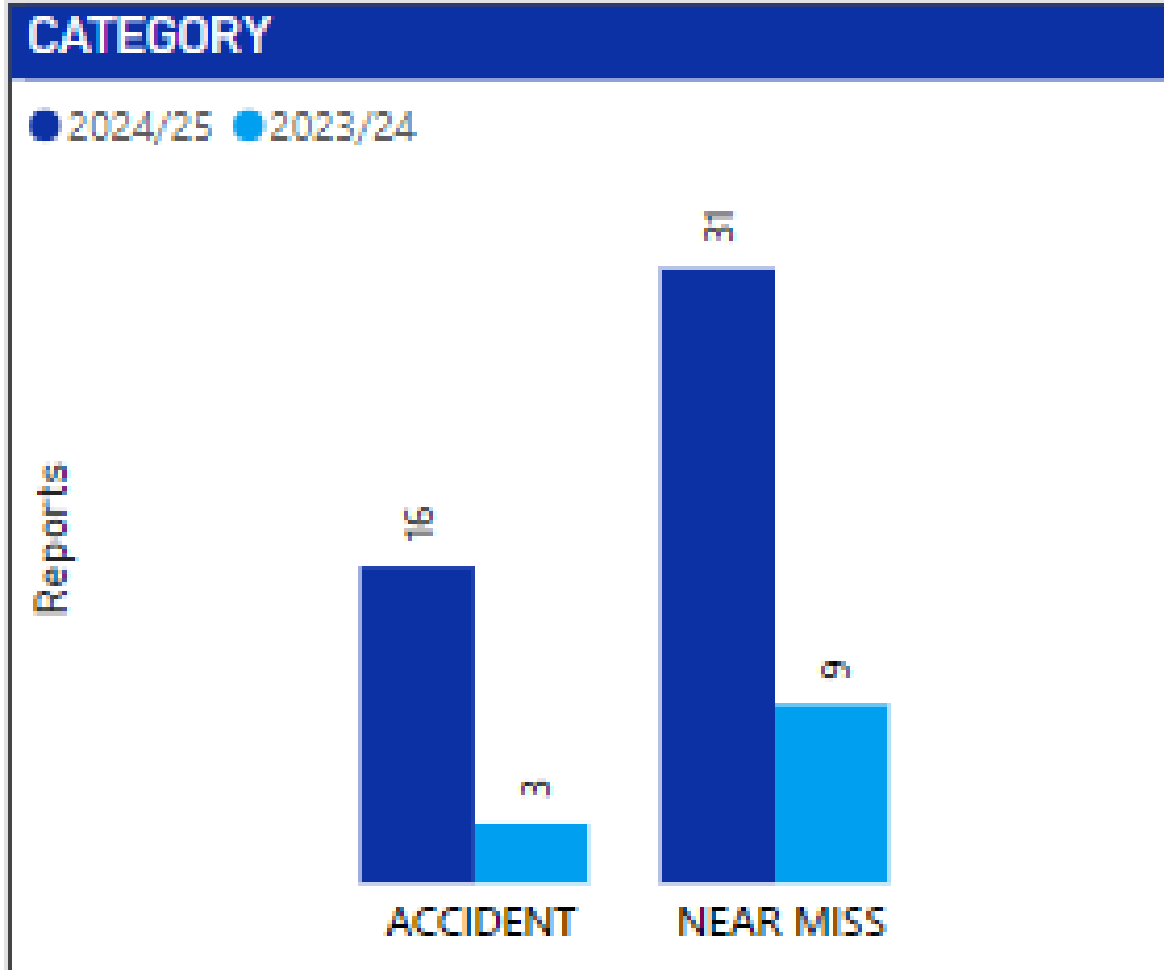
Accident/Near Miss statistics for Q1 2024-25- (shows year to date comparison)

Risk Status: Low

Working closely with Police Scotland’s Health & Safety team, Forensic Services are carrying out a review of the Health & Safety Committees structures across all our working areas.

After concerns were raised by colleagues in Rushton Court Laboratory, Dundee, we want to be sure we have the suitable structures and processes in place to deal with any issues at the appropriate level and ensuring all staff can be confident they are in a safe and healthy environment no matter where they are working.

The increase in reported accidents and near misses in Q1 24/25 is due to multiple reporting of the same issue in the Rushton Court Laboratory. Actions are being progressed.



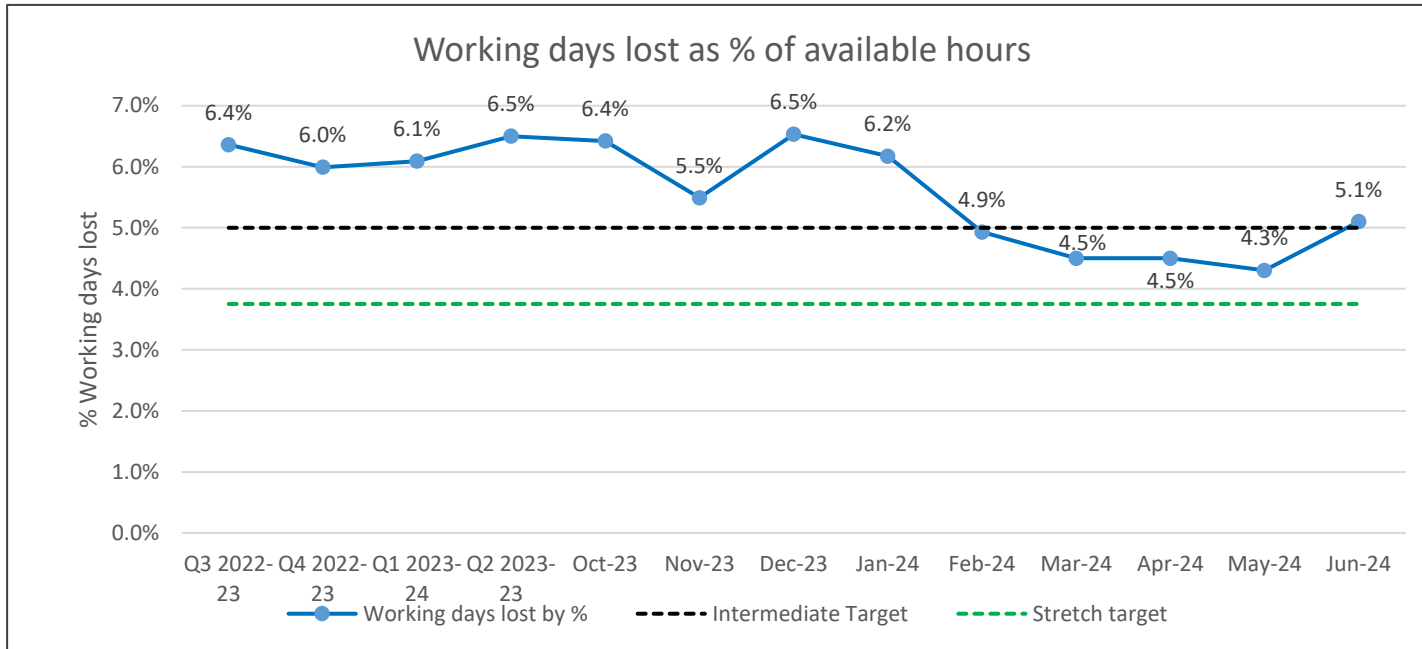
Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations - RIDDOR 2013 – HSE

There were no RIDDOR incidents reported in Q1

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%)

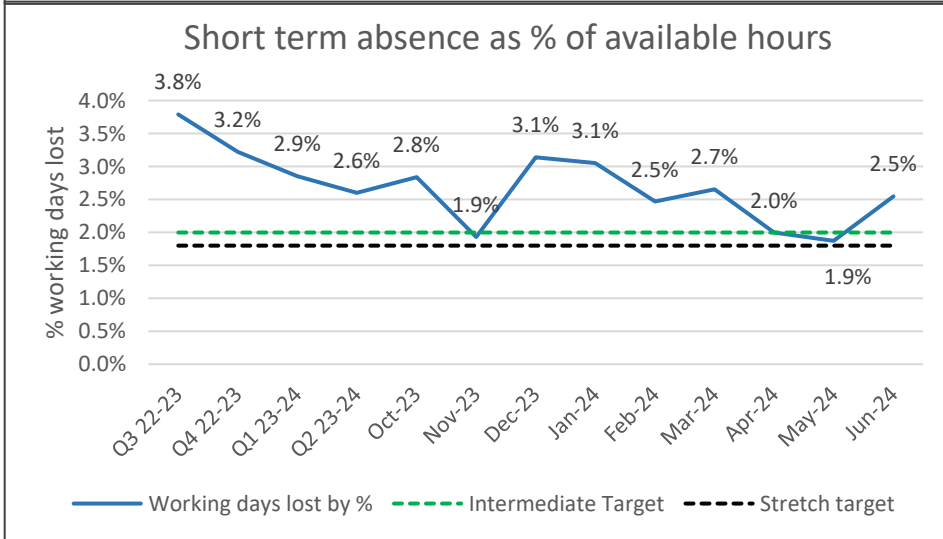
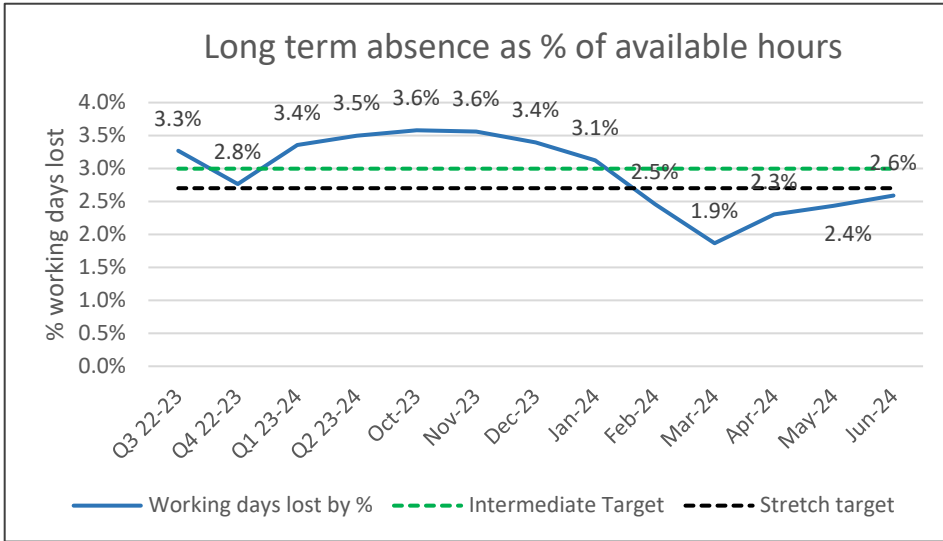
Not all absences can be attributed to work-related issues.

Absence rates have been declining gradually over the past year. While the lower rate held for April and May, there was a slight increase in June – attributed, in part, to Covid-19 symptoms.

More days were lost to absence in May than April, but with more business days and fewer public holidays, this converted to a lower rate.

Covid-19 related symptoms did not factor into April and May absence rates

The number of working days lost have shown a sustained improvement since late 2023 when Forensic Services implemented a series of initiatives and organisational change. These are having a positive impact and include: managers based with their people; revised shift patterns; psychological supervision activity; and management training and awareness.



LTA target (stretch)
3% (2.7%)

Last FY Av. 3.4%
YTD Av. 2.4%

Long term absence (LTA) is defined as any period over 28 working days. The number of LTA absences remains below recent averages following a reduction in the psychological category – overall this has reduced to 582 days lost in Q1 compared with 955 days lost in Q3 2023/24 – a fall of 39%.

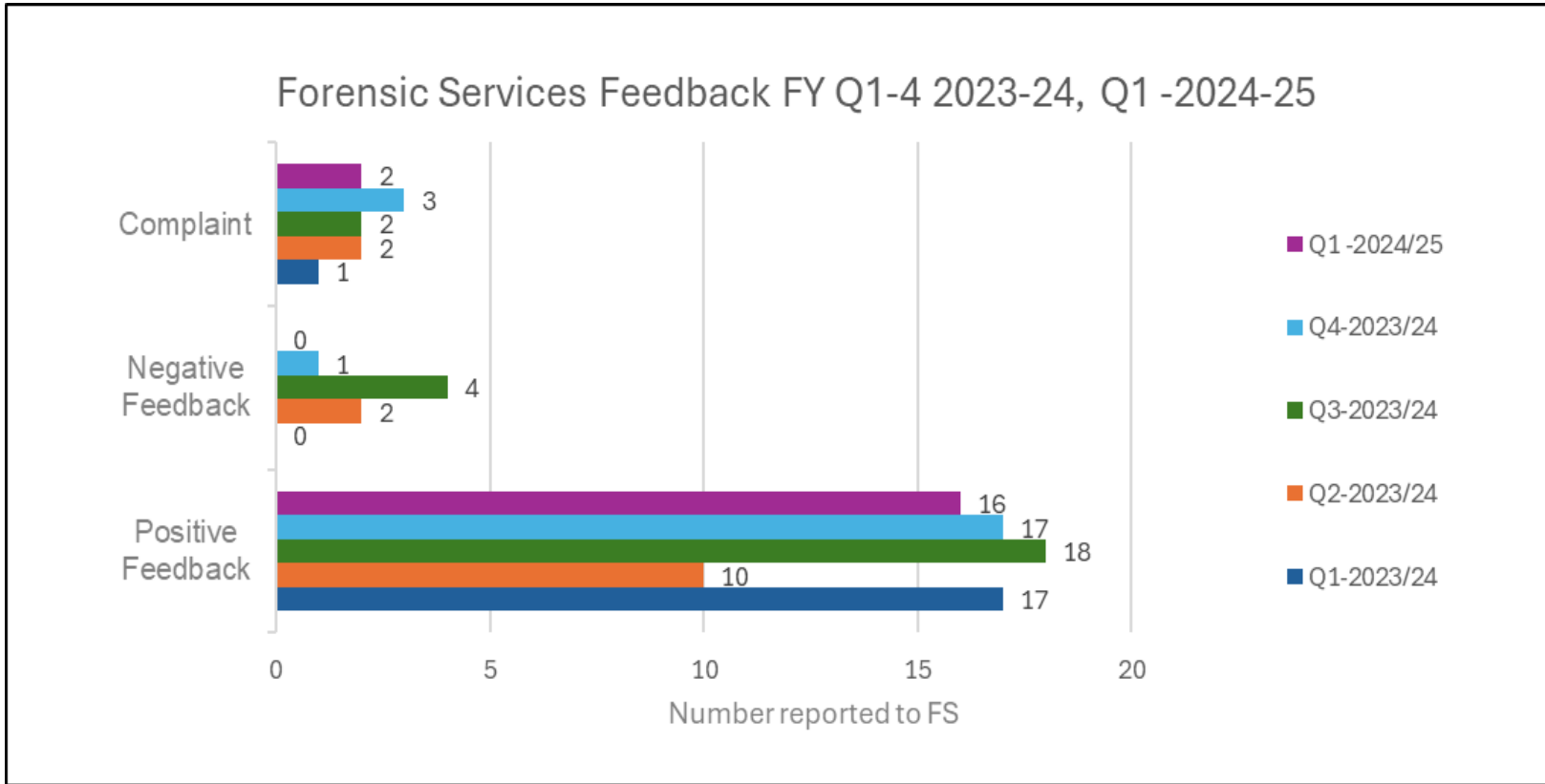
80 LTA days in May and June were lost to ‘miscellaneous’ – this category type limits insight.

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. Short term absence rates have shown a gradual fall over the past year and were on target in April and May but rose in June with a spike in COVID reporting.

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



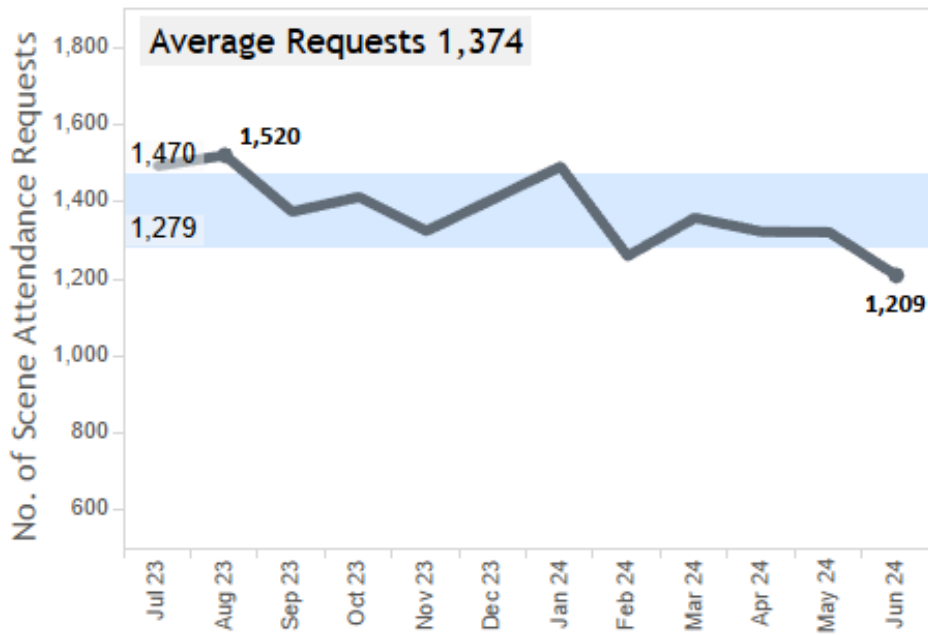
In April UKAS, who provide third-party assessment of Forensic Services, confirmed that they had seen positive progress of Management System audit activity and Forensic Services are submitting Extension to Scope applications as a result.

As previously reported progress on the UKAS requirements regarding GEN6 - *‘Reference to accreditation and multilateral recognition signatory status by UKAS-accredited bodies’* is progressing as planned with Police Scotland, COPFS and PIRC.

Planning for the 24/25 UKAS Assessments is ongoing.

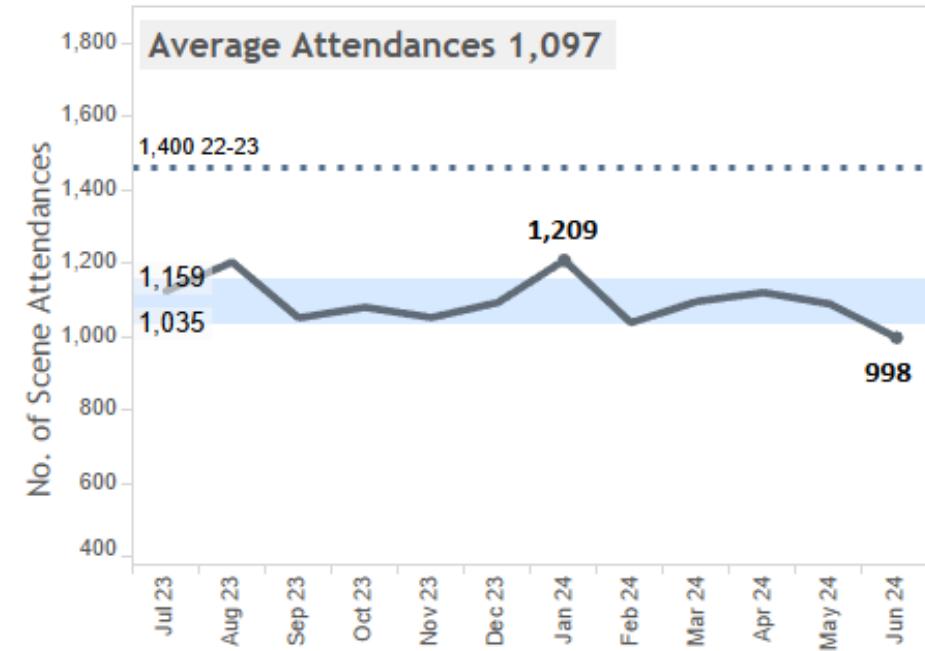
In Q1, there were 16 reported instances of positive feedback from various partners including Police Scotland, COPFS, and HMRC. There were two complaints, and zero negative feedback, reported this period by Police Scotland relating to the timeliness of scene attendance. During this period there were more than 3,100 scenes attended, putting the complaints/negative feedback into context, however, each one is reviewed, documented and actions identified. More detail in the Integrated Assurance Statement was presented at the Audit Risk and Assurance Committee (ARAC) in May 2024 on assurance activity across Forensic Services.

SCENE EXAMINATION REQUESTS



The trend in the number of scene attendance requests raised by Police Scotland continues to show a decline. This would appear to support the expectation that, due to a better understanding by Police Officers of the triaging process, a number of scene examination requests would be eliminated before they are registered with Forensic Services.

SCENE EXAMINATION ATTENDANCES



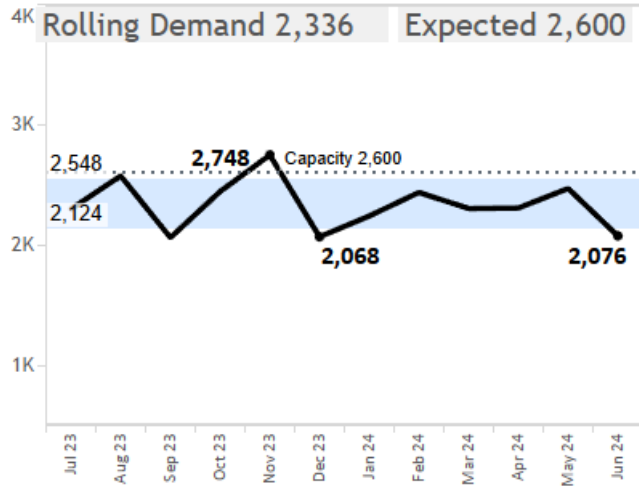
In Q1, 18.3% of triaged requests resulted in no attendance by Forensic Services, which compared with previous quarters of 17.5% (Q4), 19% (Q3 and Q2), which supports the assertion that fewer no-value requests are being made by Police Scotland. For comparison, the non-attendance rate were 13% before the establishment of the Forensic Services Scenes Tasking Unit in April 2023. This has removed the need for unnecessary examinations by our specialist resources and reduced the subsequent laboratory-based casework.

The combination of fewer requests, and reducing failure demand, has contributed to the reduction in the number of subsequent scene attendances for 2024-25. Rolling average attendances (last 12 months) are now at 1,097 per month compared with c.1,400 per month for the year 2022-23. Pre-attendance assessments are fundamental to ensuring a value-for-money, fit-for-purpose, scene-to-court approach.

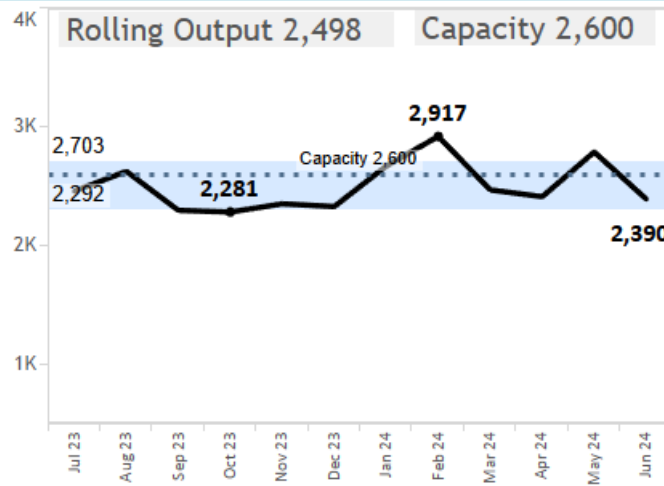
Overview – Laboratory delivery

Laboratory casework demand remains broadly within our expected range. Monthly fluctuations in casework submissions are seen, as expected. At a Forensic Services level, demand and capacity are broadly in balance. The active caseload is relatively stable, with a slight decrease seen in Q1. There has also been an improvement in the timeliness targets with 19% not achieving the original delivery dates (compared to 22% for the previous quarter). It is important to note that this does not mean there is a risk of statutory time limits not being met.

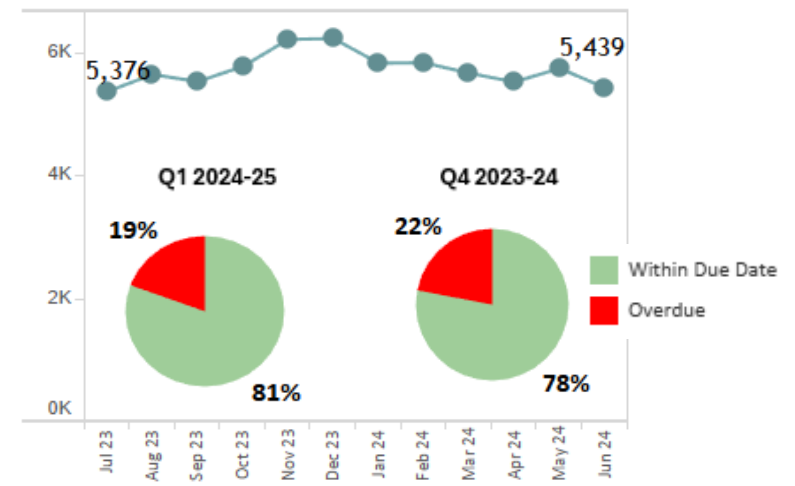
CASE DEMAND



CASE OUTPUT



CASELOAD



The **demand** graph above represents the actual average monthly demand level at 2,336 cases based. 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 trend 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% | ↑ 99% (199) ● | 95% (164) ● | 99% (199) ● |
| COPFS – urgent delivery requests | 85-95% | ↑ 87% (218) ● | 84% (229) ● | 87% (218) ● |
| COPFS – all delivery requests | 80-95% | ↑ 83% (1,991) ● | 80% (1,988) ● | 83% (1,991) ● |
| PSoS – Priority 1 delivery requests | 75-85% | ↔ 94% (583) ● | 94% (640) ● | 94% (583) ● |
| PSoS – Priority 2 delivery requests | 75-85% | ↑ 57% (1,195) ● | 40% (1,987) ● | 57% (1,195) ● |
| PSoS – Priority 3 delivery requests | 65% | ↔ 46% (2,524) ● | 44% (2,324) ● | 46% (2,524) ● |

| 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.

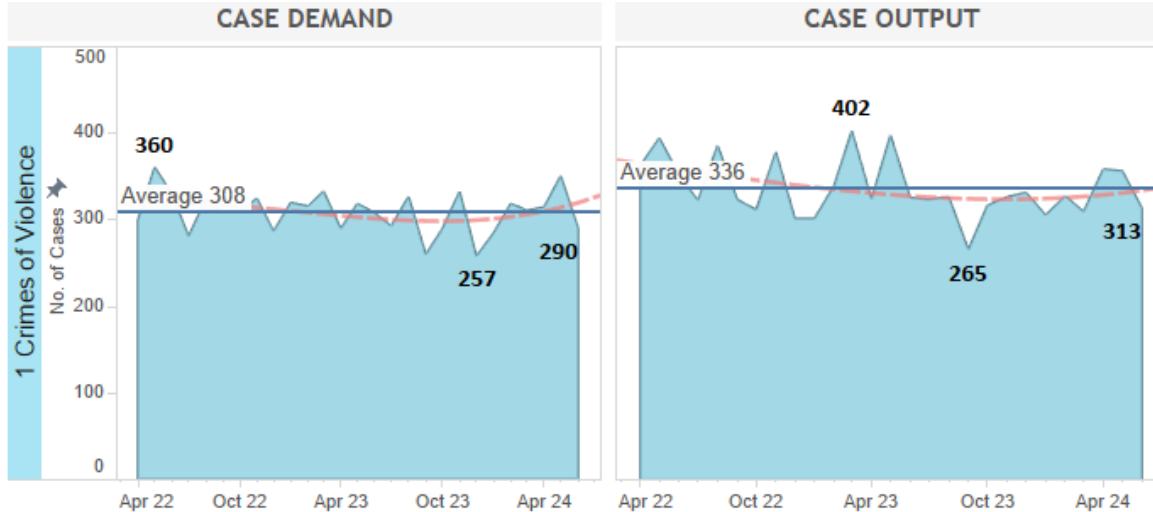
Priority 2: 8 -60 days to complete.
Exception - VCU case target is 21 days

Priority 3: 60-150 days to complete.

Urgent and priority demands from COPFS and Police Scotland are being met, with the Priority 2 and 3 demands improving, but requiring continued focus. Management plans are being taken forward to address these areas which are mostly Volume Crime Unit cases - which have a short 21-day turnaround target - and Drugs. Although performance declined in Q4 for priority 3 Drugs work, it has stabilised for Q1 and there is no risk to these cases becoming time barred. Overall, compliance has improved significantly in Priority 2 requests and marginally in Priority 3 requests (vs Q4).

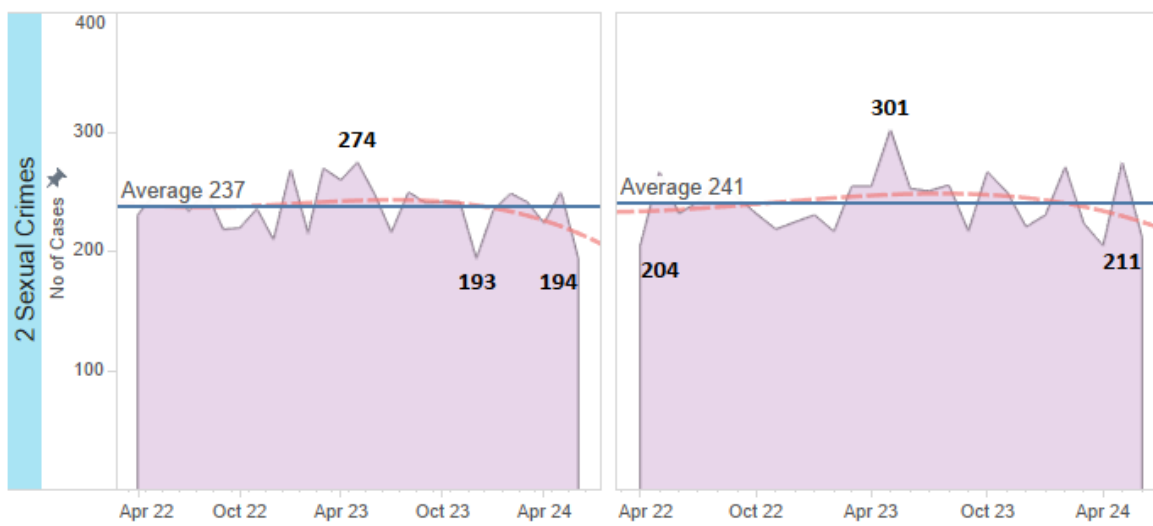
OFFICIAL Crime group profile – 3-year trend

LEGEND — Average monthly cases over the last 3 financial years - - - - - Rolling trend direction



Demand : Output Balance On Track

- Crimes of violence includes murder, attempted murder, robbery and serious assault.
- Demand for these cases has remained relatively static over the long-term.
- Group 1 and 2 tend to account for a greater proportion of high priority fast reaction cases.
- Overall for Group 1 crime, demand and capacity remain in balance.

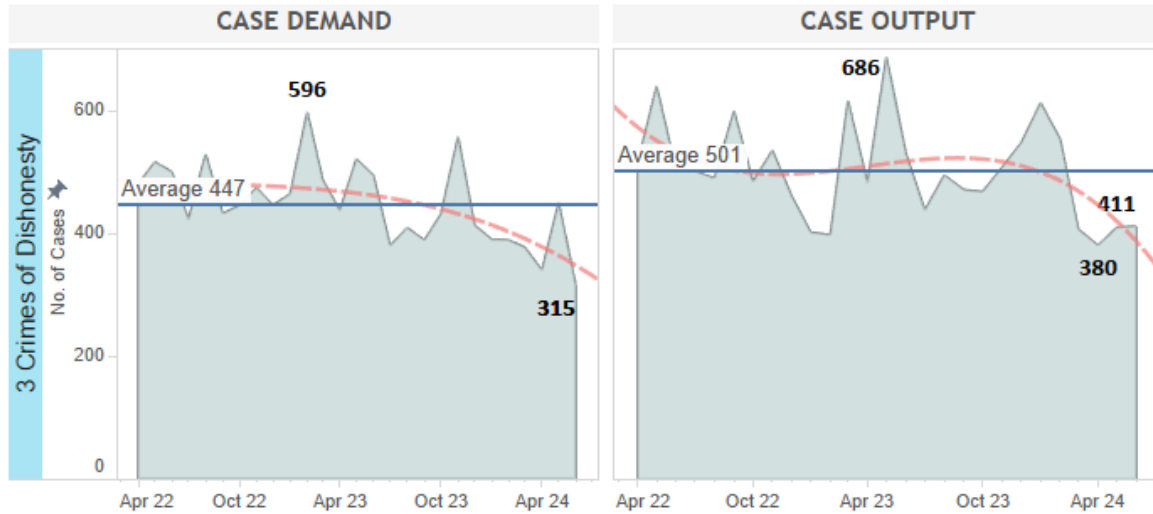


Demand : Output Balance On Track

- Rapes and sexual assaults are categorised within Group 2 - Crimes of indecency.
- Group 2 has seen a relatively sustained increase in demand for more than five years.
- The reduction of some sexual crime types observed by Police Scotland recorded crime figures has not yet been reflected in the demand profile for Forensic Services.
- In spite of increased demand pressures, particularly for the legacy Biology units, output has seen a stepped improvement to align with demand.
- Overall for Group 2 crime, demand and capacity remain broadly in balance.

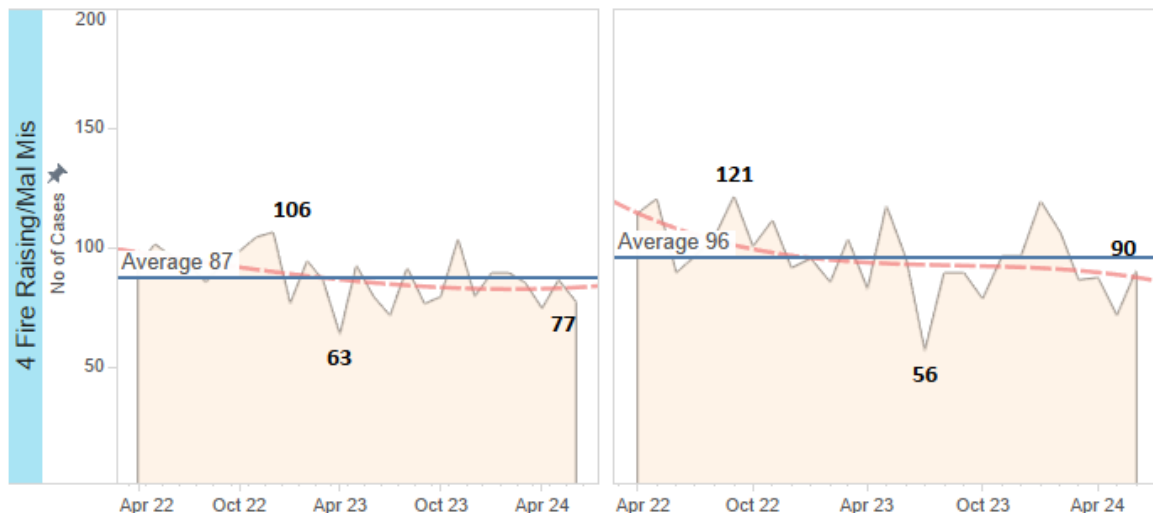
OFFICIAL Crime group profile – 3-year trend

LEGEND — Average monthly cases over the last 3 financial years - - - - - Rolling trend direction



Demand : Output Balance On Track

- Crimes of dishonesty in Forensic Services focus on housebreakings and thefts of (or from) a motor vehicle.
- Although shoplifting, common theft and fraud are very-high volume Group 3 crimes for Police Scotland, there is a smaller demand on Forensic Services.
- The rolling trend shows an increase in demand in 2021 and 2022, followed by a decline.
- Overall for Group 3 crime, demand and capacity remain in balance.



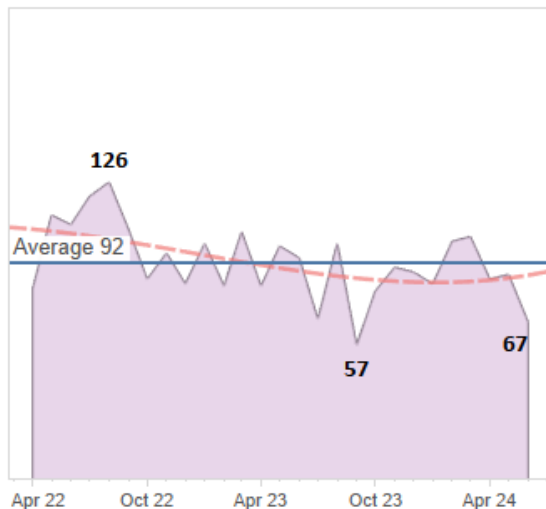
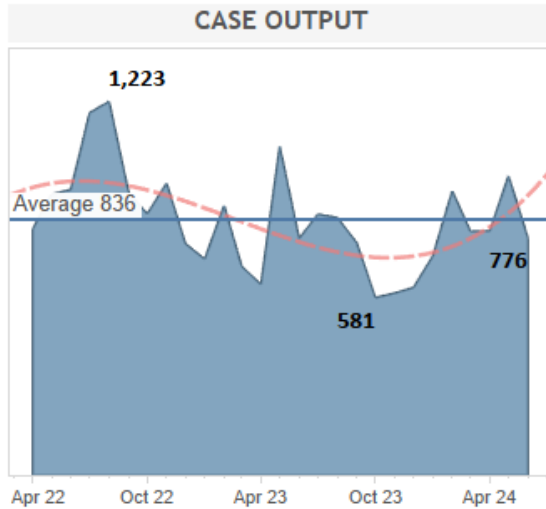
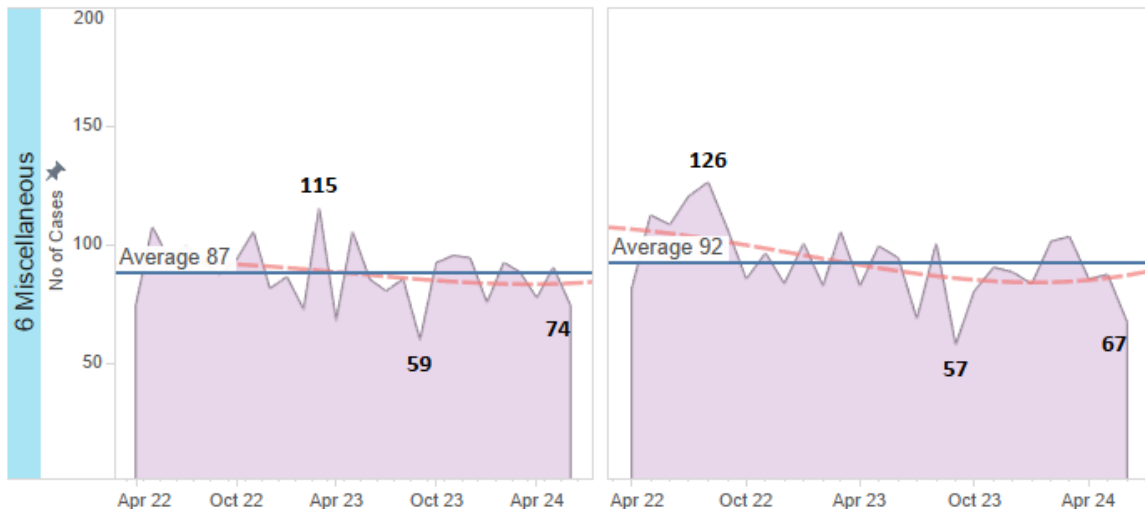
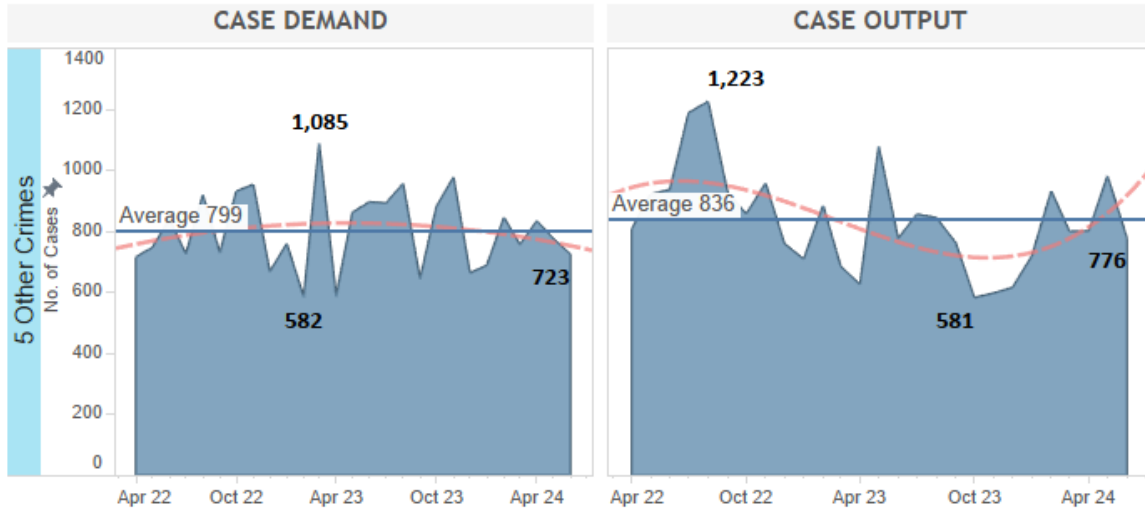
Demand : Output Balance On Track

- Group 4 Forensic Services casework mostly relates to fire-raising and vandalism, with a smaller number of cases compared to other crime groups (less than 5% of the total demand across Forensic Services).
- Overall for Group 4 crime, demand and capacity remain in balance.

Note:- due to smaller volumes of cases the x-axis has been adjusted

OFFICIAL Crime group profile – 3-year trend

LEGEND — Average monthly cases over the last 3 financial years - - - - - Rolling trend direction



Demand : Output Balance

On Track

- Group 5 crime is the highest by volume in Forensic Services and over 95% of these offences relate to possession, supply, or production of drugs.
- A reduction in demand since 2020 has allowed Forensic Services to reduce significantly the case load in the legacy drugs units.
- Workforce capacity contributed to the low output levels during Q2 and Q3, but an improvement has been seen into Q4 and Q1.
- Overall for Group 5 crime, demand and capacity remain broadly in balance.

Demand : Output Balance

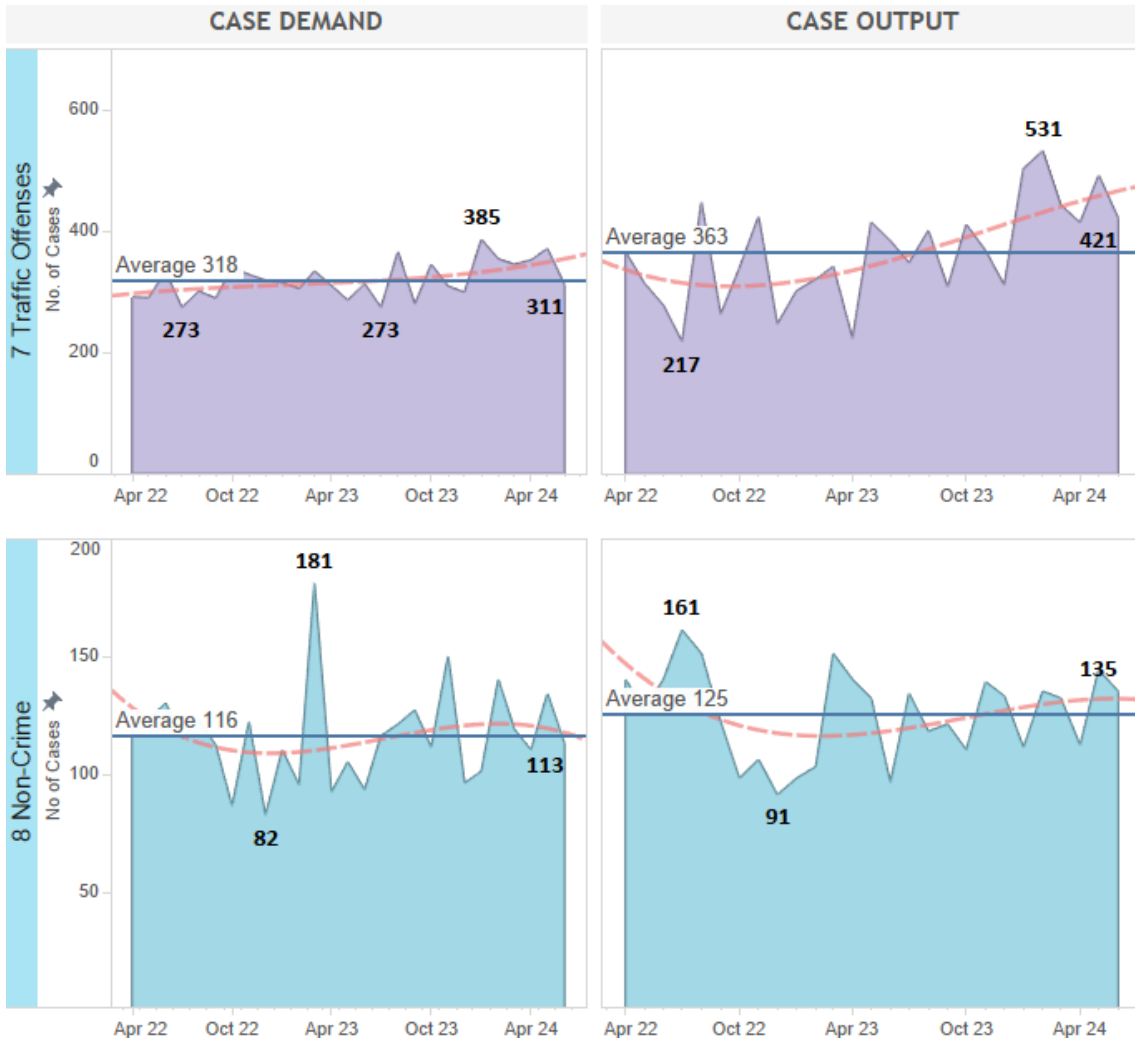
On Track

- Group 6 is a low-volume category and has seen demand reduce over the last year.
- This category reflects the 'miscellaneous offences' grouping used by the Scottish Crime Recording Standard. In Forensic Services, around 40% of these cases relate to firearms offences and they also include stalking / threatening abusive behaviour and common assault.
- Firearms demand has reduced slightly, whilst output has remained relatively stable over the longer-term, but has decreased temporarily more recently.
- Overall for Group 6 crime, demand and capacity remain in balance.

Note:- due to smaller volumes of cases the x-axis has been adjusted

OFFICIAL Crime group profile – 3-year trend

LEGEND — Average monthly cases over the last 3 financial years - - - - - Rolling trend direction



Demand : Output Balance

On Track

- Approx 70% of Group 7 demand is related to Section 4 and 5A of the Road Traffic Act (related to drug driving), with Section 5A demand being more pronounced.
- Demand for these has increased by more than 2,000 cases a year following implementation of Section 5A legislation in Scotland in October 2019.
- A further 10-15% relate to Section 5 – drink driving. Others relate to dangerous driving and road traffic collisions.
- Case output is currently better aligned with demand, due to outsourcing contracts put in place to manage the unanticipated levels of Section 5A demand. Excluding this outsourcing output would have meant the Criminal Toxicology unit running a significant output deficit over a protracted period of time.
- A long-term sustainable model for drug driving is required to balance demand and capacity in the longer-term.

Demand : Output Balance

On Track

- Group 8 activity relates to non-criminal incidents. This can include drug-related deaths, sudden or unexplained deaths, other fatal incidents, and missing persons.
- Demand and output are in balance. Demand is stable overall although it can be subject to high variation between months.
- These are low volume unpredictable submissions.

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

This chart details the performance of all areas across Forensic Services and how we assess internally where there is good performance and areas being managed more closely.

| Business area | 2024-25 Q1 | 2023-24 Q4 | 2023-24 Q3 |
|---|------------|------------|------------|
| Search and Recovery Scenes | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow |
| Biology | Green | Green | Green |
| Volume Crime Unit | Yellow | Yellow | Red |
| Drugs | Yellow | Red | Yellow |
| Fingerprints | Green | Green | Green |
| Chemistry & Documents | Green | Green | Green |
| Drug Driving Section 4 & 5A turnarounds | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow |
| Criminal Toxicology | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow |
| Postmortem Toxicology | Green | Green | Green |
| Firearms | Red | Red | Red |

- **Scene examination** incident response within 24 hours continues to improve at 87% for the quarter against a target of 90% (vs 81% in Q4), partly as a result of improving capacity and the embedding of processes within the Scenes Tasking Unit.
- **Fingerprints** caseload remains at a low level with a strong sustained performance through Q1.
- **Drugs** output has exceeded demand over the quarter, with a consequent decline in caseload. Staff availability during the quarter has contributed to timeliness recovery being slower than forecast, albeit with a reducing level of overdue work. The position remains relatively fragile, however, and is being closely monitored and managed.
- **Post-Mortem Toxicology** has continued to embed improvements from the previous quarter with strong sustained performance.
- The **Firearms** team has a unique skill set and has a small number of staff with a national remit. Service delivery was impacted significantly in Q3, Q4 and Q1 by an unplanned reduction in capacity. Workforce availability is being managed actively and an additional member of staff was recruited and joined the team during Q4. Good progress is being made in training and developing competence of the new member of staff, which is resource-intensive, and can take around two years to complete. The team also attended some scenes, have had some Court abstraction and have had some more complex cases submitted during Q1.