

Meeting	Authority Meeting
Date	23 June 2022
Location	Video-conference
Title of Paper	SPA Chair's Report
Presented By	Martyn Evans
Recommendation to Members	For discussion
Appendix Attached:	NO

Purpose

To update Authority Members on activities carried out by the Chair since the May 2022 Authority meeting.

Drug Driving Analysis

An update is provided at item 10 on our agenda from Fiona Douglas, Director of Forensic Services in relation to drug driving cases in Scotland. Forensic Services have been reporting sustained high levels of demand for drug driving testing to the Authority since 2020. Testing has been conducted on more than 5,600 blood samples since October 2019. The effect of this sustained demand has now risen to the level where the justice system has seen an impact on the ability to prosecute around 7% of cases. As at 20 May 2022, 386 cases cannot be pursued to prosecution because of delays in forensic testing and analysis and having reached the current statutory 12-month time limit. More cases are expected to reach their statutory time limit in the months ahead. This is deeply concerning and a serious failure.

A Gold Command Group, involving the Authority, Forensic Services, Police Scotland, COPFS and the Scottish Government was established in May to examine, compile and correlate the affected cases and review the drug driving testing process. In addition, HMICS has confirmed it will carry out a review of the end-to-end process for obtaining, analysing and reporting drug driving blood sample results in order to support criminal proceedings. This review will consider the issues that have led to cases reaching their statutory time limit before they can be progressed to prosecution, whether the mitigations in place are having an impact and whether these issues have been resolved as far as practicable.

There is no doubt that demand for this service has been underestimated. The Authority has a clear interest in the scale and effectiveness of public policy, investment in and approaches to tackling drug driving. We will continue to work closely with Forensic Services, the Scottish Government, Police Scotland, COPFS and HMICS to develop and agree a sustainable model for this service whilst minimising the ongoing risks associated with the current demand and capacity issues.

Resource Spending Review

The results of the Resource Spending Review were published by the Scottish Government on 31 May 2022. The Review is not a finalised budget for policing. It sets out a framework for spending in the years ahead encouraging us to plan accordingly. It is disappointing therefore that the Review set out a flat cash revenue budget position for policing. This is not the real terms revenue protection policing had been promised, and would, in itself, be challenging. Any flat cash budget in the years ahead will have serious implications and hard choices for policing. The reform of policing in Scotland has delivered significant savings to the

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public purse to date. Investment to continue to transform and improve policing is essential, particularly across the estate and ICT. In response, I have asked the Accountable Officer and our Chief Executive to re-establish our budget development meetings to ensure the Authority's active involvement in these early discussions about the implications, choices and priorities for the years ahead.

Joint SPA/Police Scotland Research and Evidence Forum

I Co-Chaired a recent meeting of the Joint SPA/Police Scotland Research and Evidence Forum earlier this month. The forum discussed a wide range of ongoing research activity, including a common focus on VAWG, issues around race and ethnicity and data collection and themes relating to deprivation and inequality and their interaction with public confidence and trust. This was my last meeting as Co-Chair. Tom Halpin will take over as Co-Chair going forward. The forum will be reviewing its terms of reference this summer to coincide with its three-year anniversary and we expect Forensic Services to be represented and involved going forward.

RECOMMENDATION

To update Members on activities carried out by the Chair since the May 2022 Authority meeting.