



<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Forensic Services Committee</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>7<sup>th</sup> May 2024</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>MS Teams</b>
<b>Title of Paper</b>	<b>3.2 Forensic Services Performance Report – Quarter 4 2023/24</b>
<b>Presented By</b>	<b>Vicki Morton, Chief Operating Officer, Forensic Services</b>
<b>Recommendation to Members</b>	<b>For Discussion</b>
<b>Appendix Attached</b>	<b>Forensic Services Performance Report</b>

**PURPOSE**

To present Forensic Services Performance Report, Q4 2023/24 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 Q4 2023/24.
- 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 – Q4 2023/24.**

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 2023/24: Quarter 4



OFFICIAL

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The new operating model is in place as at 1 April 2024, with further developments to be scheduled in line with resourcing. We have had several years of detailed work and full consultation on change with all staff throughout and performance has remained relatively steady and consistent. We will continue with our risk-based approach to managing performance as we move ahead with this change. We will also continue to manage the budget prudently – only investing further in the outstanding parts of the New Operating Model when we have the sustainable resources to do so.

Balanced scorecard delivery is strong for Q4, with continued focus on Criminal Toxicology capacity and demand, strategic workforce plan forecasting and development of the Values and Behaviours Framework. This status is also reflected in the three-year crime trends which are on track for all crime groups.

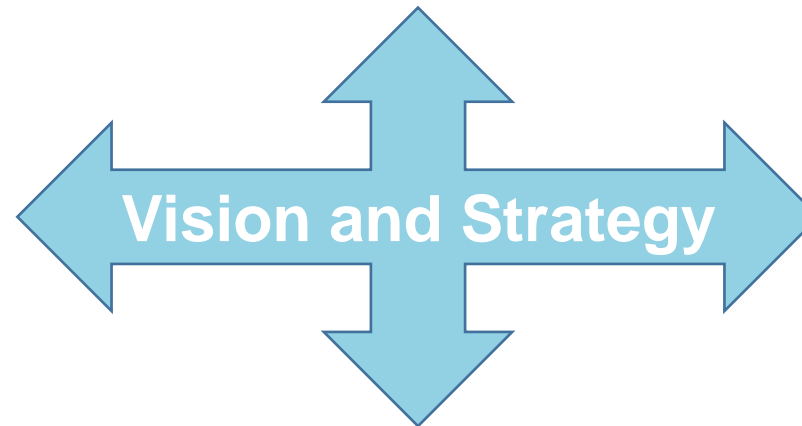
The Forensic Services business plan for 2022-2024 is progressing in line with delivery timescales and we have reviewed priorities and identified activities for carry forward while developing the Business Plan for 2024-2026. There has been a focus on reporting of injuries in the quarter following a RIDDOR incident. Long term absence reduced from 3.4% in Q3 to 1.9% in Q4, including a reduction in absences related to psychological disorders.

Scene examination incident response has shown an improvement in performance since Q3. Post Mortem Toxicology has continued to embed improvements from the previous quarter, and Fingerprints has reduced its caseload. While improvement work in the Drugs units and the Volume Crime Unit are showing higher output, the caseload volume means improvements will take some time to reflect in timeliness measures.

FINANCE	
Balanced budget	COMPLETE
Deliver FS Efficiencies Plan	COMPLETE
Deliver Capex Plan	COMPLETE

INTERNAL BUSINESS PROCESSES	
DNA centralisation	COMPLETE
Drug Driving Toxicology Development Plan	●
Best Value Assessment	●

CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS	
Criminal Toxicology capacity / demand	●
SWFP forecasting	●
HMICS Action Plan (Criminal Toxicology)	●



PEOPLE	
People Plan	●
Develop E, D & I plan	COMPLETE
Implement Operating Model	●
Develop Values & Behaviours Framework	●

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

Changes since the previous Q3 report are mostly related to finance: the delivery of a balanced budget; efficiencies plan; and capital expenditure plan. Further details are in the Finance Update.
















Work is ongoing for all activities with amber status. The end of year position of the balanced scorecard is used to shape the Business Plan for 2024/25-2025/26 and associated balanced scorecard.




RAG status	
<b>COMPLETED</b>	<b>9</b>
Started / on track	5
Started / activity is being closely monitored	1*
Started / activity is in need of attention	0

*\* Understand our physical ICT landscape and develop a plan for networking of all instrumentation and have Forensic Services ready to be paper light. Work undertaken at Moorepark Laboratory will underpin the ICT road mapping work to enable Digital Division to move all instruments and systems on to the network*

- The Forensic Services business plan for 2022-2024 is progressing in line with delivery timescales. In developing the Business Plan for 2024-2026 we have reviewed priorities and identified activities for carry forward and delivery over the next two-year period.
- In line with the Forensic Services Strategy, dialogue continues with Police Scotland Digital Division to determine options to deliver a fit-for-purpose networking capability across Forensic Services, with an initial focus on Post Mortem Toxicology at the Moorepark Laboratory. The business plan for 2024-2026 describes our commitment to develop the long-term Digital and Data plan for Forensic Services.
- 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	Current Quarter status	Previous Quarter status	Year to Date	Comments
<b>Strategic Outcome 1</b>  Our people are supported through a positive working environment, enabling them to provide excellent forensic services	Absence rate				2% reduction in absence rate from Q3 to Q4. Within the required 5% target.
	Reporting of injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 - HSE				1 x RIDDOR incident reported.
	Management Training				On-going and on track
<b>Strategic Outcome 2</b>  Forensic Services are sustainable, adaptable and prepared for future challenges	Compliance to Business Plan				On track
	Compliance to Operating Model – budget constraints withstanding				Operating model changes completed 1 <sup>st</sup> 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 has been one RIDDOR incident recorded in Q4 which was investigated and managed effectively.

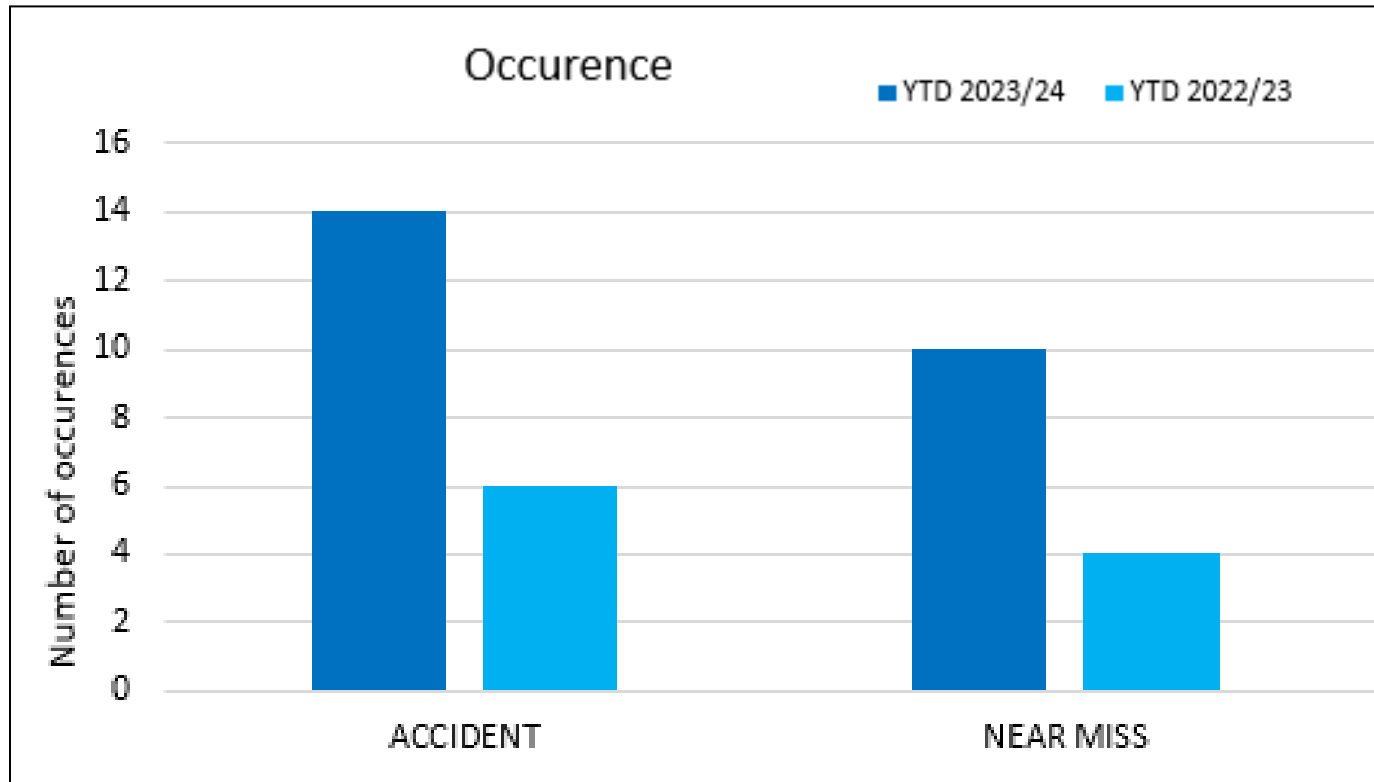
Rag status key
On track
Issues being managed and monitored closely
Issues in need of attention

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.

	Activity	Current Quarter status	Previous Quarter status	Year to Date	Comments
<b>Strategic Outcome 2</b> 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 19)
	Capital and Revenue plan (Inc. efficiencies)				Revenue is on track for a balanced budget. Capex is currently underspent.
<b>Strategic Outcome 3</b> Forensic Services deliver high-quality, ethical services; and leads in order to advance forensic science	Compliance to UKAS ISO17025				Annual surveillance visits complete for 23/24. Positive feedback and accreditation status maintained.
<b>Strategic Outcome 4</b> Forensic Services work collaboratively with partners to serve the needs of the public and Criminal Justice in Scotland	Partnership working				Collaborative working within the Biometrics and data governance areas
	Public Confidence in FS				Good feedback from Police Scotland on work of FS

Accident/Near Miss statistics for Q4 2023-24



The ongoing review of health and safety statistics (accidents/near misses/RIDDOR) has highlighted that there are no significant trends or areas of concern, with a robust health and safety culture and management framework in place.

Risk Status: Low

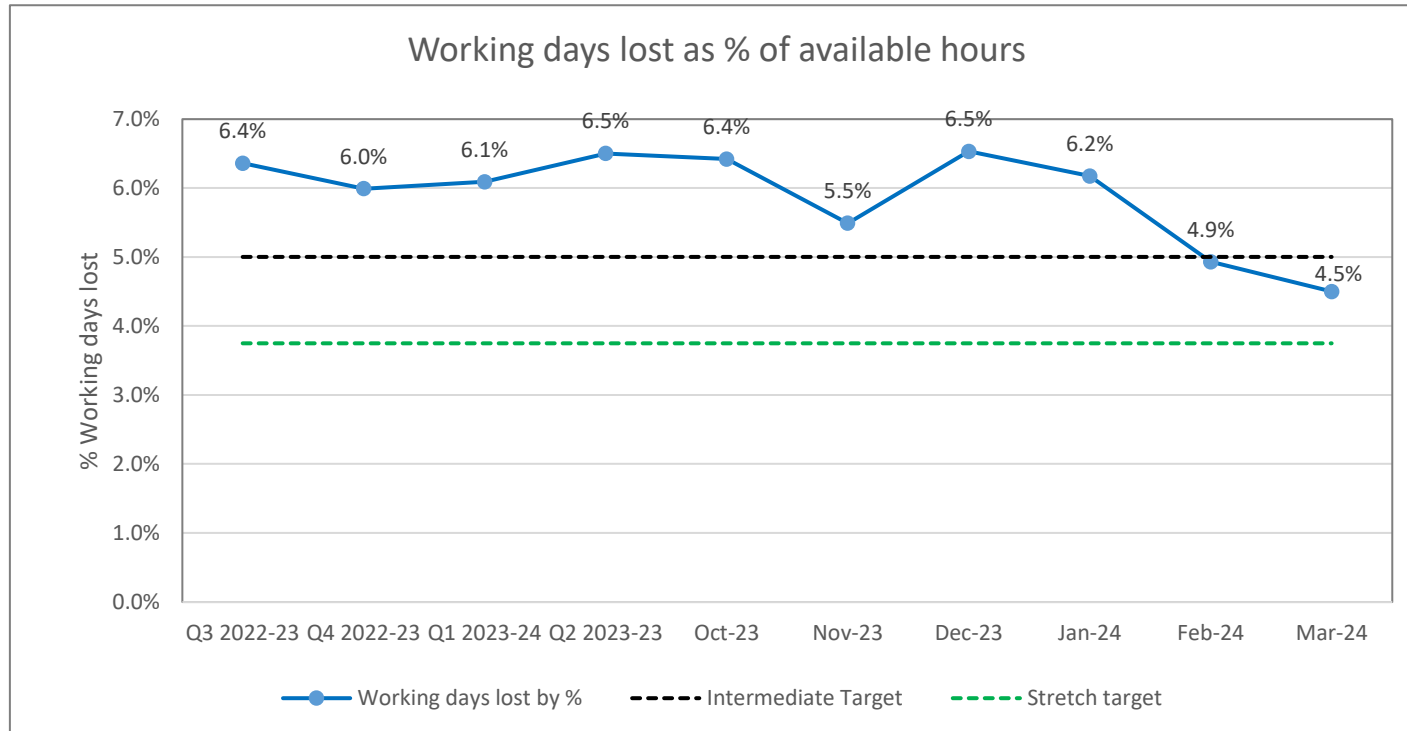
Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations - RIDDOR 2013 - HSE

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.

There has been one reportable RIDDOR for Q4 (Search and Recovery Scenes– Manual Handling), however, after full investigation, this was not directly attributable to the working environment.

# 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.



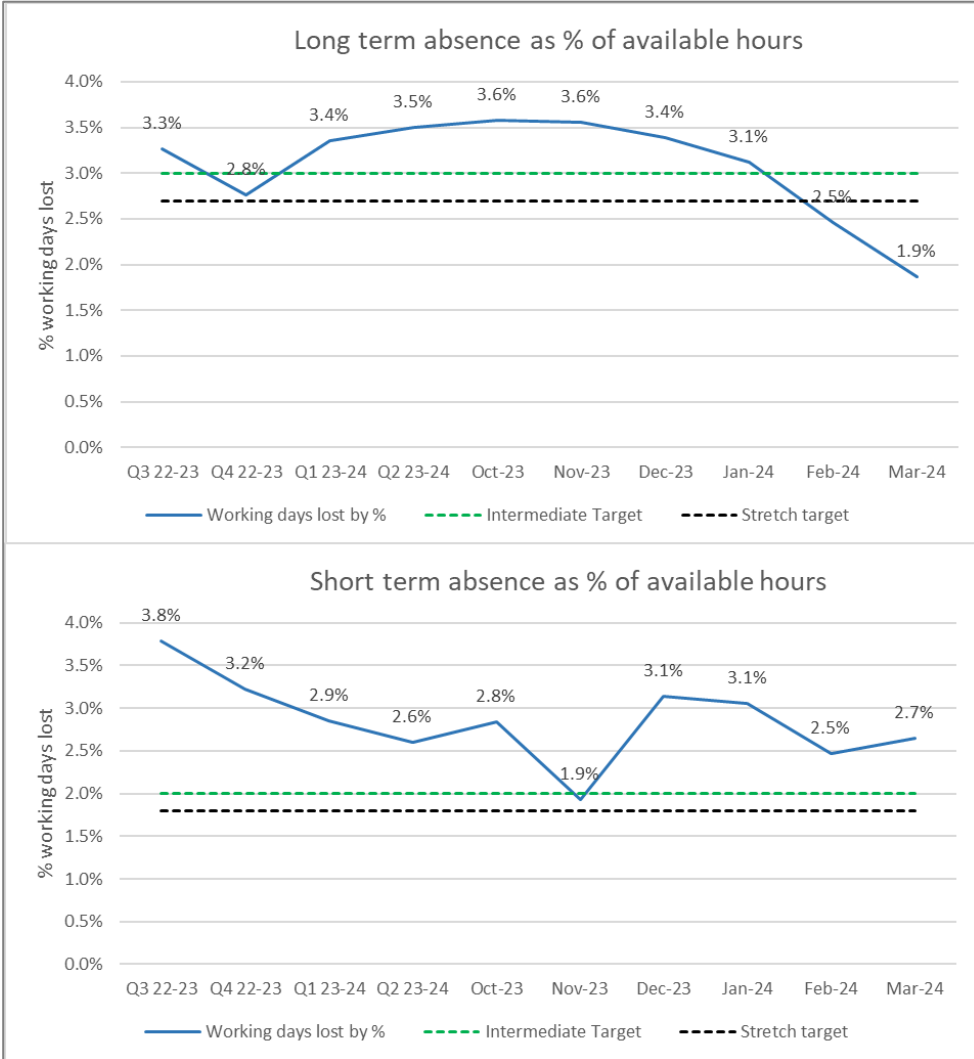
Target (stretch)  
5% (3.75%)

Not all absences can be attributed to work-related issues. The absence rates declined 2% from Q3 to Q4. A member of staff left Forensic Services through medically retirement this quarter.

In the first two months of the year, 19 employees returned from sick leave. This included those on long term absence, five of whom had more than 100 days absence (actual days lost).

COVID-19 related symptoms were attributed to sickness absence on a minority of occasions – less than half a percent. There were 150 fewer sickness days than in the same quarter last year.

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. 3.1%**  
**YTD Av. 3.3%**

The number of long term absences (LTA) reduced by almost 400 days in Q4, which resulted in a reduction to below the stretch target. Long term absence is defined as any period over 28 working days.

**STA target (stretch)**  
2% (1.8%)

**Last FY Av. 3.5%**  
**YTD Av. 2.5%**

Short term absence (STA) has remained stable with Q3, although it is running 0.5% over baseline target. Short-term absence is any period less than 28 working days.

Psychological disorders remain the highest absence reason which has historically trended high due to the nature of Forensic Services work. Musculo-skeletal and miscellaneous are the next two highest reasons recorded. There were nearly 140 fewer absence days attributed to psychological disorders in March, compared with the December equivalent reported at Q3.

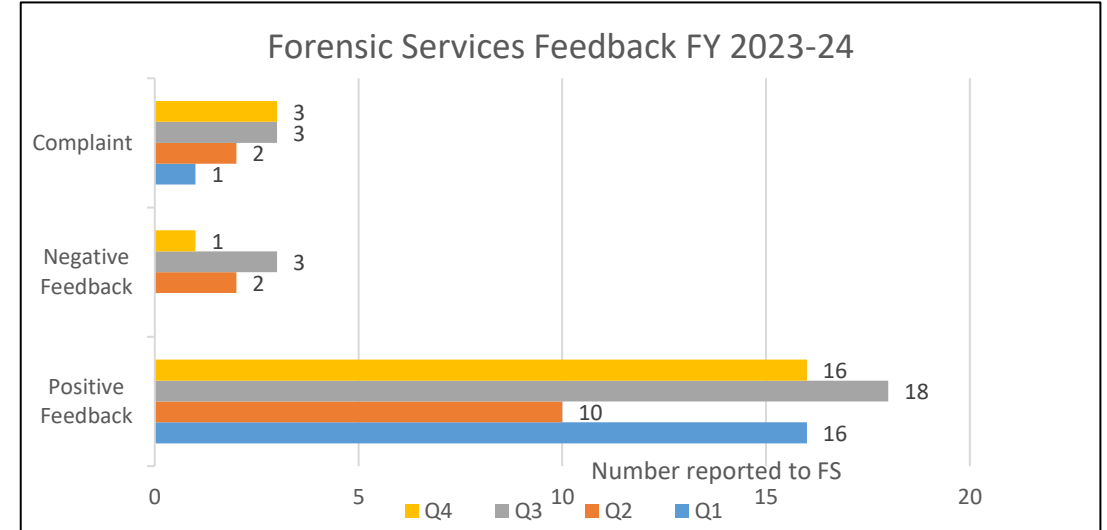
UKAS undertook rescheduled audit days in Q4 to complete their annual surveillance assessment visit. The total days of UKAS assessment in 2023/24 was 75 days, providing third party assessment and assurance of our technical processes and that the Quality Management Systems is fit-for-purpose and being utilised appropriately.

A very positive UKAS visit was held in March, which reviewed DNA technical and management system requirements, completing the Edinburgh annual assessment.

In early April UKAS confirmed that they had seen positive progress of Management System audit activity and they have now agreed Forensic Services can submit Extension to Scope applications.

At the last Committee we reported that Forensic Services were in discussion with UKAS regarding GEN6 - 'Reference to accreditation and multilateral recognition signatory status by UKAS-accredited bodies' and the requirement to document on Forensic Services test reports what activity is accredited/unaccredited'. A plan for compliance was shared and a collaborative short life working group with Police Scotland and COPFS is being set up to take this work forward. There is an indicative timeline of September 2024 for completion of this work ahead of the next UKAS surveillance visit in November 2024.

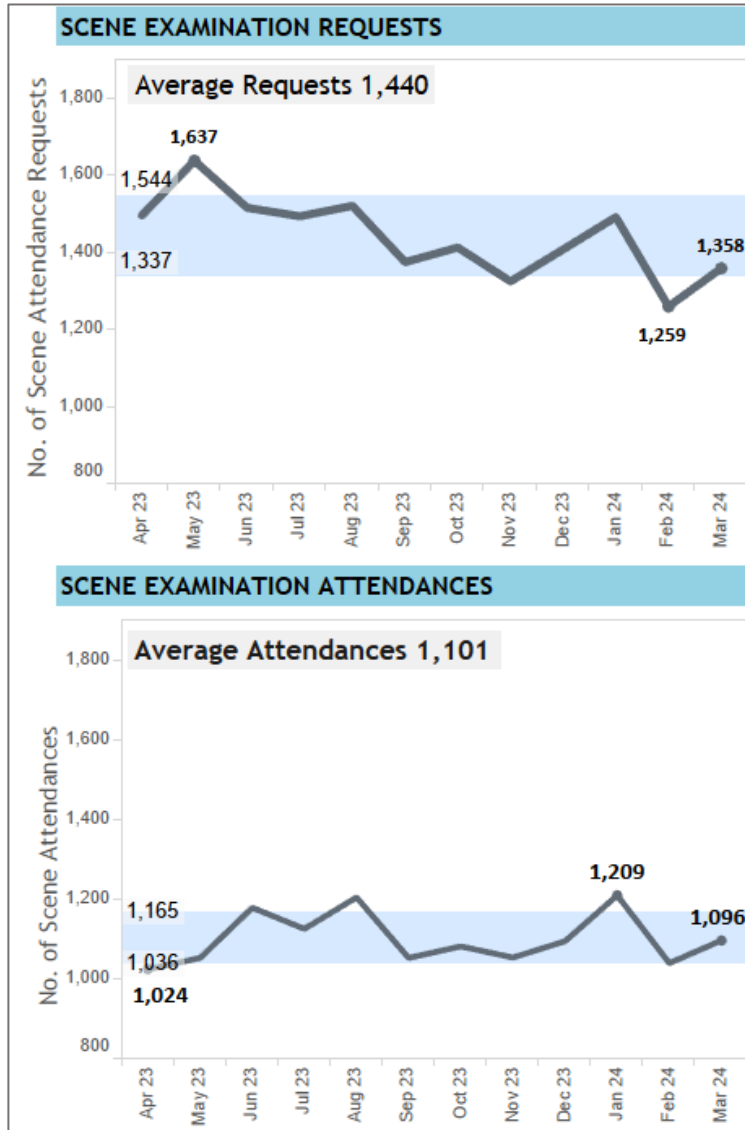
In Q4, there were 16 reported positive feedbacks received from various agencies including Police Scotland, COPFS, NHS Scotland, and a member



of the public - relating to the speed, accuracy and turnaround of forensic activities.

There were three complaints, and one negative feedback, reported this period by Police Scotland relating to the timeliness of scene attendance. During this period there were more than 3,300 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 is to be presented at the Audit Risk and Assurance Committee (ARAC) in May 2024 on assurance activity across Forensic Services.



The number of scene attendance requests raised by Police Scotland continues to trend below average, with a significant dip below the control limit in February 2024. This dip was mainly due to a reduction in serious crime requests.

Attendances at scenes of crime spiked in January, out with the upper control limit, with high levels of both serious and Group 3 crime requests.

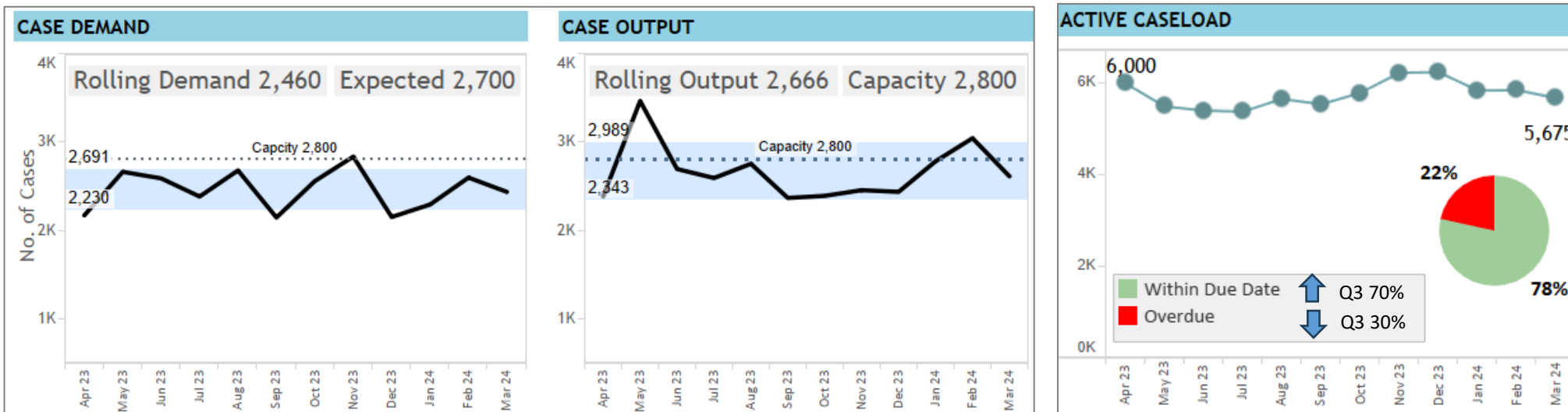
The Scenes Tasking Unit was established in April 2023 with responsibilities including the triaging of scene requests and the allocation of onward tasks to scene examiners. Triage aims to assess the request against agreed attendance criteria and to reduce failure demand. With the triaging process now standardised, the expectation was that there would be a rise in the number of requests which would not require a forensic scene attendance.

In Q4 17.5% of triaged requests resulted in no attendance, a reduction from the 19% reported in Q2 and Q3, suggesting fewer no-value requests are being made by Police Scotland. The non-attendance rate had been 13% before the establishment of the Forensic Services Scenes Tasking Unit. This has removed the need for unnecessary examinations by our specialist resources and reduced the subsequent casework.

The combination of fewer requests, and reducing failure demand, has contributed to the reduction in the number of subsequent scene attendances for 2023-24. Rolling average attendances are now at 1,101 per month compared with c1,400 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 within expected range, although, lower than that in the previous year. Monthly fluctuations in casework submissions are seen as expected. At a Forensic Services level, demand and capacity are broadly in balance. Our active caseload is relatively stable, with a slight decrease seen in March. There has also been an improvement in the timeliness targets with 22% not achieving the original delivery dates. It is important to note that this does not mean there is a risk of statutory time limits not being met.



The **demand** graph above represents the predicted monthly demand level at 2,700 cases based on a 5% adjustment to service levels from 2022-23.

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 2,800 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%	↔ 95% (164) ●	96% (148) ●	97% (644) ●
COPFS – urgent delivery requests	85-95%	↔ 84% (229) ●	84% (216) ●	87% (853) ●
COPFS – all delivery requests	80-95%	↔ 80% (1,988) ●	81% (2,020) ●	83% (6,854) ●
PSoS – Priority 1 delivery requests	75-85%	↔ 94% (640) ●	94% (465) ●	93% (1,837) ●
PSoS – Priority 2 delivery requests	75-85%	↔ 40% (1,987) ●	40% (1,886) ●	41% (7,317) ●
PSoS – Priority 3 delivery requests	65%	↓ 44% (2,324) ●	68% (1,699) ●	68% (8,284) ●

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. (NB- VCU case target is 21 days)

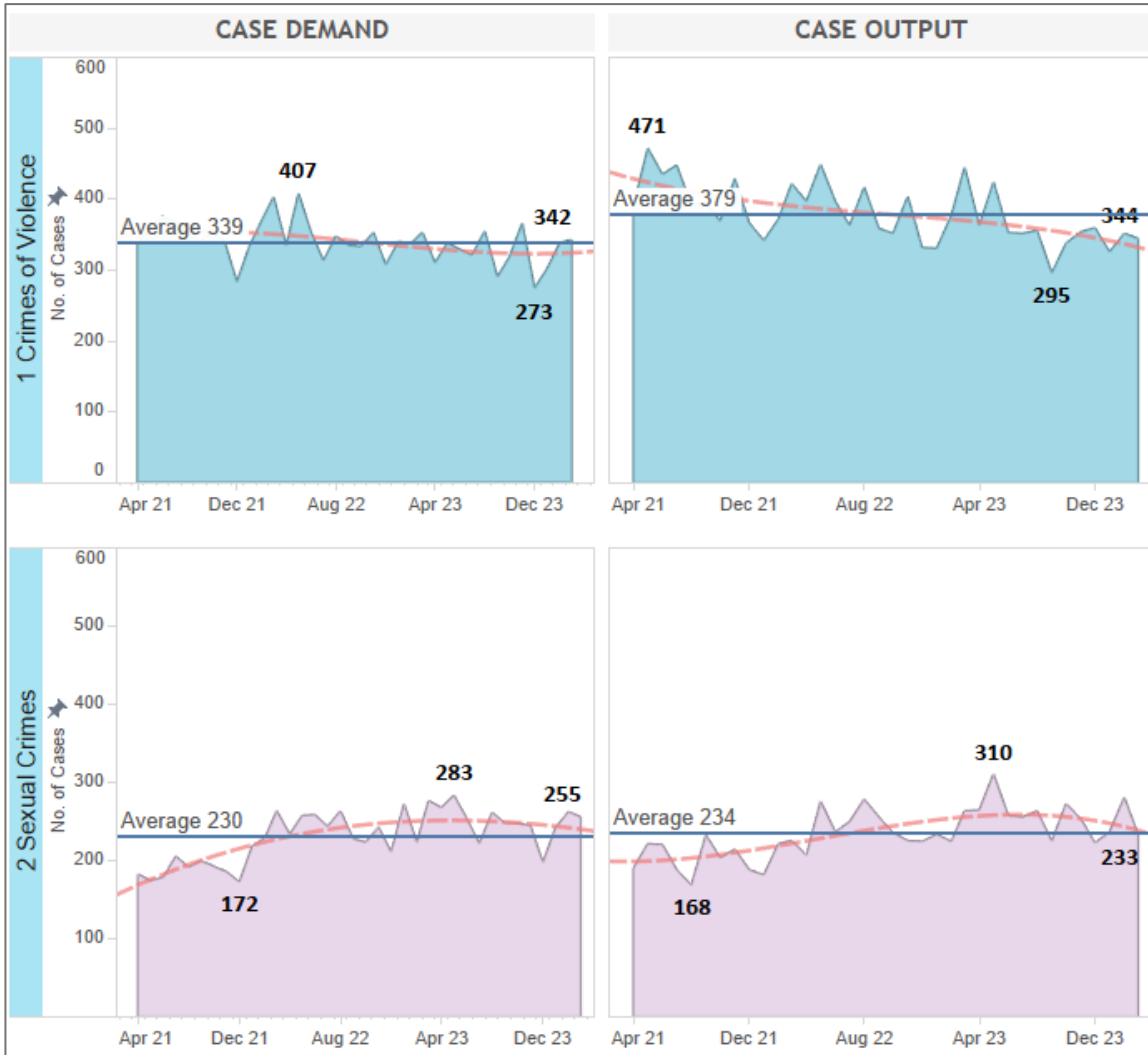
Priority 3: 60-150 days to complete. (NB VCU target is >21 days <42 days)

VCU= Volume Crime Unit, high volume DNA activity

**Urgent and priority demands from COPFS and Police Scotland are being met, with the Priority 2 and 3 demands in need of attention. 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. The Volume Crime Unit has improved performance since Q3 reducing its active caseload by 50% - within Drugs an increase in demand has led to lower timeliness in Q4. Although timeliness has declined in Q4 for priority 3 work, there is no risk to these cases becoming time barred.**

# 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

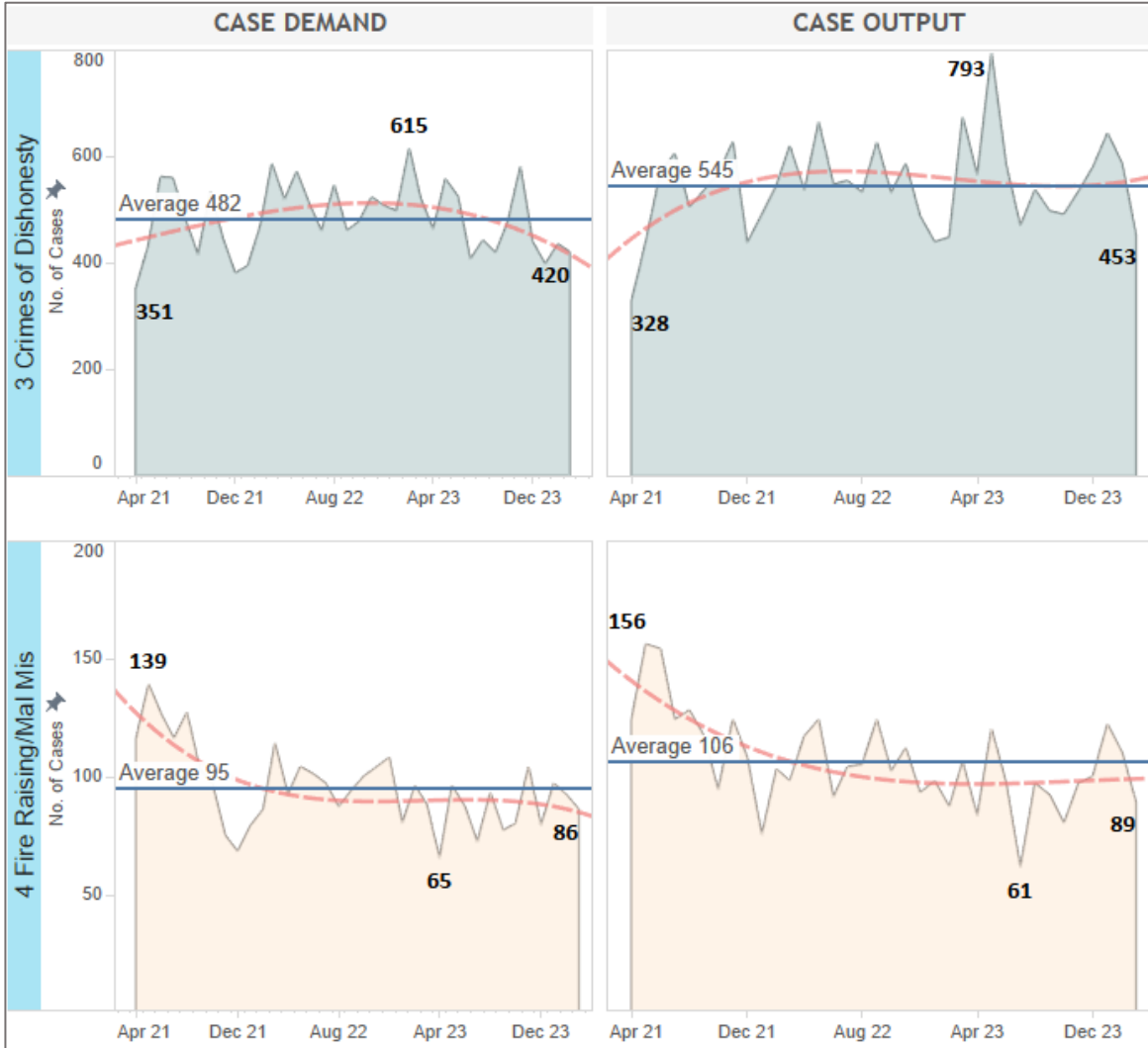
- Crimes of violence includes murder, attempted murder, robbery and serious assault.
- Demand for these cases has remained relatively static over the long term.
- Year-to-date demand is marginally below 2022-23 levels across the business but remains high for Biology-related casework. Group 1 and 2 tend to account for a greater proportion of high priority fast reaction cases.
- Output levels have matched new demand and have reduced open casework levels compared with previous years.

**Demand : Output Balance** On Track

- Rapes and sexual assaults are categorised within Group 2 - Crimes of indecency.
- Group 2 has seen a 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 Biology units, output has seen a stepped improvement to align with demand.

# 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) motor vehicles.
- 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.

**Demand : Output Balance**

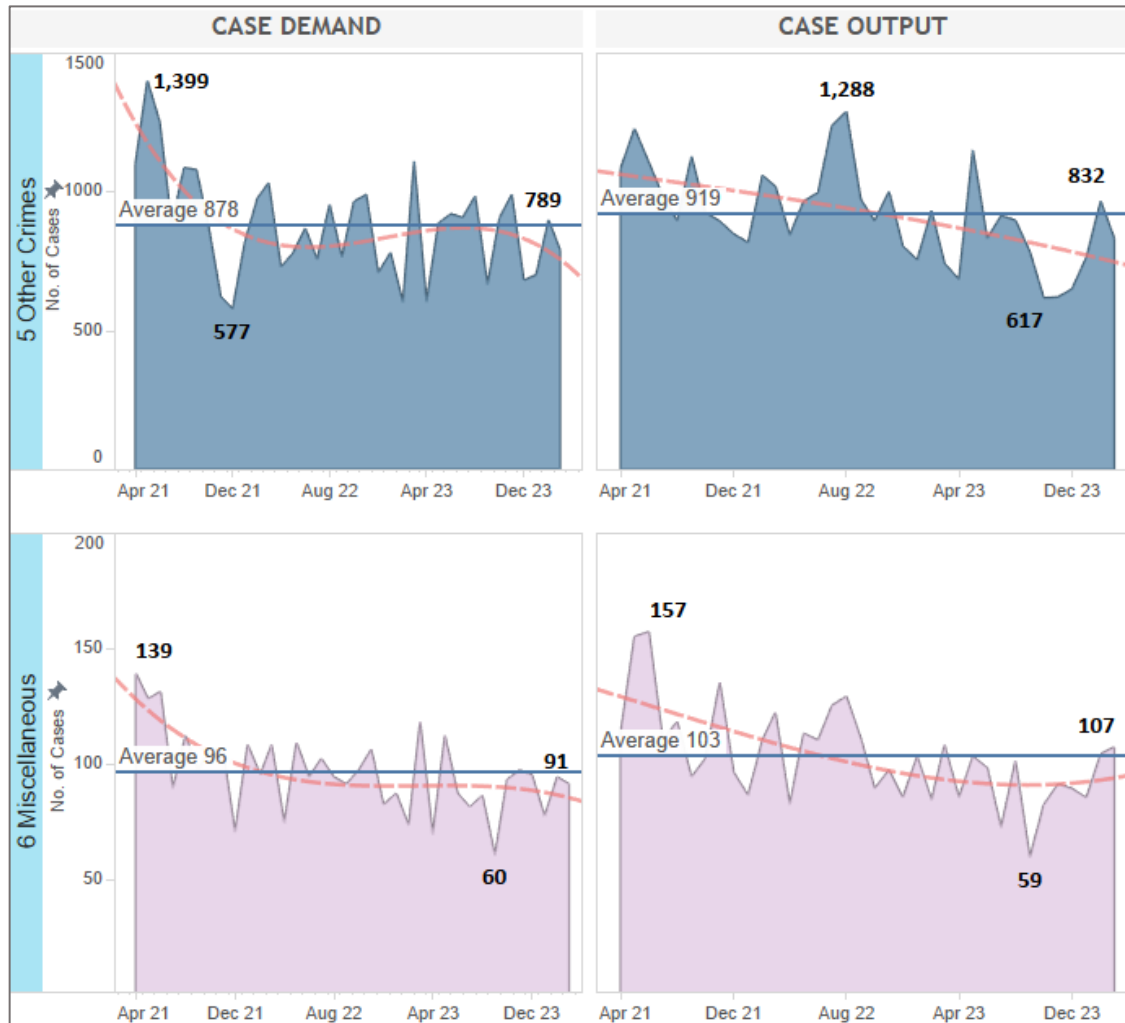
On Track

- 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).
- Demand and output levels are at a good balance.

**Note: due to smaller volume 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

Issues being managed and monitored closely

- Group 5 crime is the highest by volume in Forensic Services with more than 95% of these offences relate to possession, supply, or production of drugs.
- Workforce availability contributed to the low output levels in Q2 to Q3 with an improvement seen in Q4.

### Demand : Output Balance

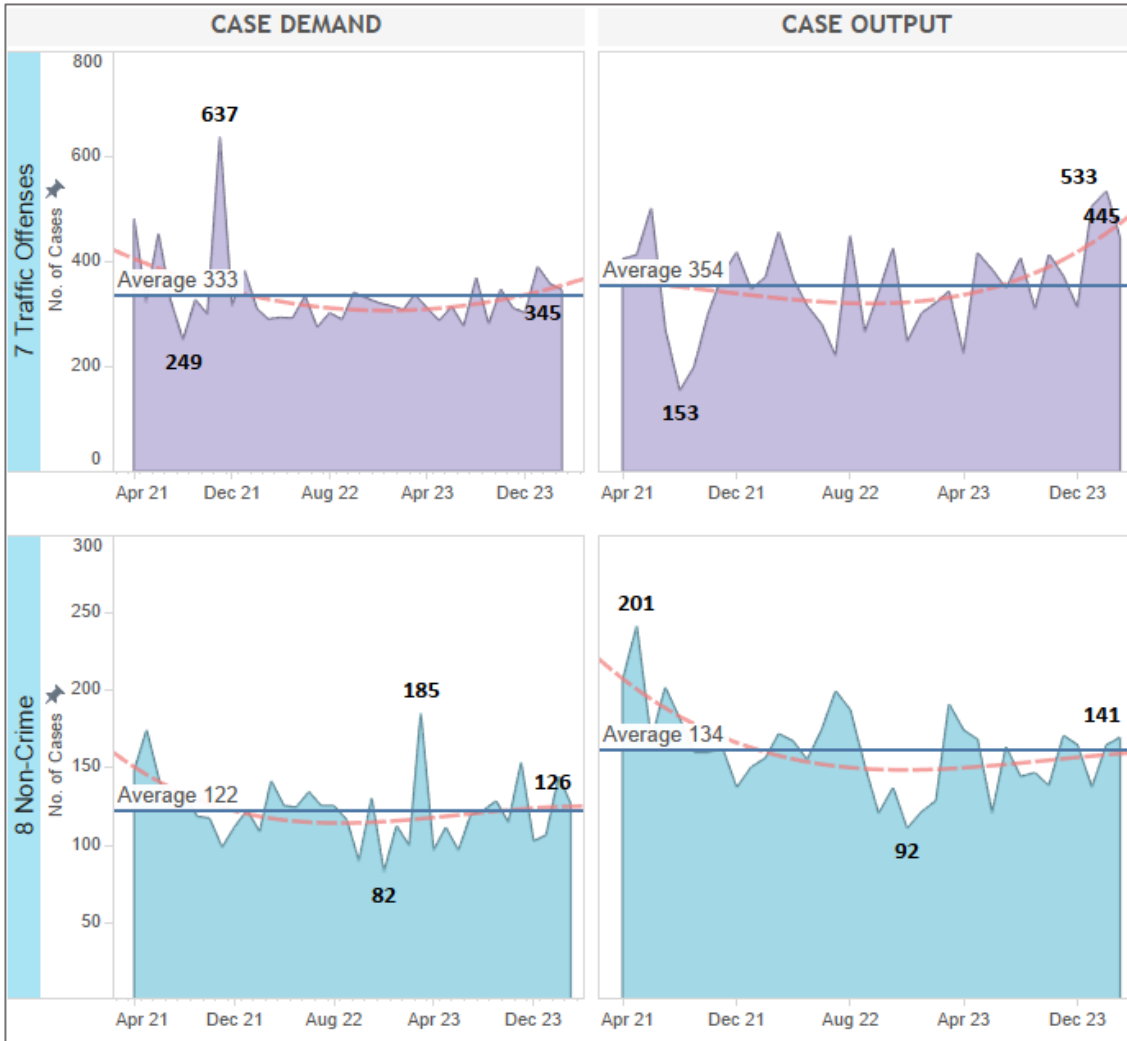
On Track

- Group 6 has a low-volume of cases 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- related demand has seen a rise for the current year-to-date, which, together with workforce availability issues, has impacted upon the unit- showing a decrease in output for this area.

**Note: due to smaller volume 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 for Forensic Services relates to Section 4 and 5A of the Road Traffic Act (related to drug driving).
- 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 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 unit running output deficit of c120 cases per month since April 2021.

**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 a low volume unpredictable submission.

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

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

Business area	Q4	Q3
Search and Recovery Scenes		
Biology		
Volume Crime Unit		
Drugs		
Fingerprints		
Chemistry & Documents		
Drug Driving Section 4 & 5A turnarounds		
Criminal Toxicology		
Post Mortem Toxicology		
Firearms		

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.

- **Scene examination** incident response within 24 hours sits at 81% for the quarter against a target of 90%, which is in part as a result of abstractions for training and the embedding of processes within the recently established Scenes Tasking Unit. While not achieving target, there has been an improvement in performance since Q3.
- **Fingerprints** have delivered a reduction in the caseload by 25% since Q3 and a very significant reduction in case turnaround from 40 to 22 days.
- Improvement work in the **Drugs units** led to higher outputs (up by more than 50%), however, an increase in demand means this has yet to be reflected in better timeliness.
- **Post Mortem Toxicology** has continued to embed improvements from the previous quarter with strong sustained performance - meeting both Priority and Non-Priority turnaround times.
- 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 and Q4 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, but can take around two years to complete. The team also had some large and complex cases submitted during Q4.