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| Meeting | Public SPA Board Meeting |
| Date and Time | 24th August 2017 |
| Location | Stirling Court Hotel, Stirling |
| Title of Paper | Joint National Gateway Pilot Final Report |
| Item Number | 11.2 |
| Presented By | Tom Nelson |
| Recommendation to Members | For Noting |
| Appendix Attached: | Yes |

PURPOSE

To provide Board Members with information about the Joint National Forensic Gateway pilot, designed to deliver enhanced forensic solutions through multi agency assessment of forensic submissions.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. A Joint National Forensics Gateway (JNFG) pilot has been undertaken over a 4 month period to assess submissions being made to Forensic Services.
- 1.2. The pilot was set up to review forensic submissions prior to scientific work being conducted. The objective was to test whether the submissions process could be improved and demand managed effectively for Forensic Services through this process.
- 1.3. The summary report attached details the work carried out during the pilot exercise and the results.

2. FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE REPORT TOPIC

- 2.1. The JNFG pilot was found to be worthwhile improving the overall quality of submissions however did not reduce demand on Forensic Services which was one of the areas being tested.
- 2.2. It is recommended that the pre submission review procedures are continued in a revised manner using the learning from this process to develop this function.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. There are no direct financial implications from this paper.

4. PERSONAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. There are no direct personal implications from this paper.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. There are no direct legal implications from this paper.

6. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. There are no direct reputational implications from this paper.

7. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. There are no direct social implications from this paper.

8. COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 8.1. There are no community impact implications associated with this paper.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. There are no equalities implications associated with this paper.

10. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1. There are no environmental implications associated with this paper.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members note the information presented in the attached report.

Joint National Forensic Gateway Pilot Evaluation

Background

The Joint National Forensic Gateway (JNFG) pilot was designed to deliver enhanced forensic solutions through multi agency assessment of forensic submissions which would allow for requested forensic analysis to always be salient, relevant and add value to the investigation or prosecution and through active management throughout the life of a case.

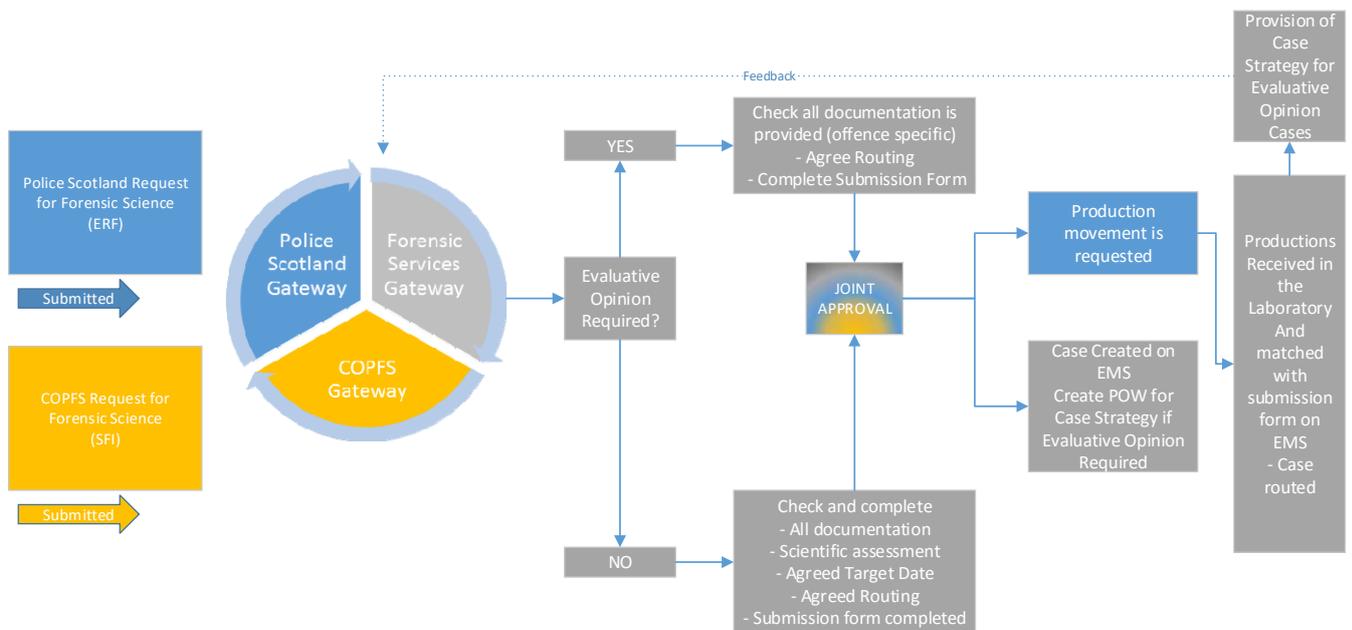
It was established to ensure an effective tasking and coordination process was in place within the JNFG that underpinned and facilitated the setting of forensic strategy in both detected and undetected cases together with priority setting and the management of demand for services.

This effective prioritisation and facilitation of Police Examination Requests (ERF) and COPFS Standard Forensic Instruction (SFI) would therefore deliver efficiency in the management of examinations and maximise forensic capacity ultimately providing improved forensic services and an enhanced service to the Criminal Justice System.

The Joint National Forensic Gateway (JNFG) Pilot was undertaken between 24th October 2016 and 28th February 2017. This included the placement of dedicated Forensic Services staff (scientific and administrative) into the JNFG to enable them to evaluate and perform an up-front case assessment. During the pilot a range of different types of cases from a variety of relevant crime types and geographical regions were progressed through the JNFG.

Process

An overview of the high level pilot process for submissions is detailed in the diagram below;



The pilot was primarily formed to introduce the scientific evaluation into this process, however the concept of active case management ran alongside this for ongoing management of cases following their submission into Forensic Services.

Police Scotland Submissions

All Police Scotland requests for forensic analysis were submitted through the regional Police Scotland gateway portals. The gateway portals assessed the submission, administratively for onward submission into Forensic Services. Police Scotland gateway undertook the following;

- To ensure the documentation is fit for purpose and meets the required standards
- To challenge (if necessary) submitting officers regarding whether the forensic analysis is required
- To prioritise examinations
- Active case management as the investigation progressed – is the work still required or has the priority changed

Approved submissions were then passed onto the Forensic Services Gateway for scientific assessment. The Forensic Services Gateway undertook the following;

- To ensure the documentation is fit for purpose and meets the required standards
- To check the scientific validity of the request
- To identify any critical capacity issues and inform and initiate negotiations or renegotiations with PS and COPFS gateways regarding how said capacity issues effect accepted or pending submissions where there was a shortage of available capacity.
- To identify the specific functions within FS that were required to participate in the analysis to support downstream routing of casework, agreed target dates and renegotiated as required
- Active Management of Submitted Requests/Instructions from PS and COPFS

As a result of this additional review by Forensic Services it was anticipated that the following benefits may be observed;

- Effective prioritisation of ERF both at the submission stage and through the lifetime of the investigation (via active case management)
- Reduction in the movement of unnecessary productions
- Increased effectiveness or evidential value
- Maximising the use of forensic services capacity
- Delivering best value utilisation of people, processes and technology

Evaluation of Police Scotland Submissions

The following was found from the pilot:

1. Overall demand for casework was not significantly changed
2. Approximately a quarter of submissions were amended these mainly related to Group 3 crime
3. A reduced number of productions that required submission was noted, over the pilot this equated to around a 20% reduction – this was as a result of a full scientific assessment being carried out prior to submission rather than by the scientist on initiating the work in the laboratory

4. There were found to be both scientific enhancements and administrative enhancements in a quarter of submissions.

COPFS Submissions

All COPFS requests for forensic analysis routed through the pilot are submitted on an SFI (Standard Forensic Instruction) through the national COPFS gateway. The purpose of the COPFS Gateway is to;

- Ensures the documentation is fit for purpose and meets the required standards
- Challenge what Forensic Science is really required to provide the necessary support to the prosecution of the case
- Understands what potential could be added from the examinations requested and if this will add value to the investigation
- Prioritises examinations according to an agreed methodology
- Active case management as the prosecution progresses – is the work still required or has the priority changed

Approved submissions are then passed onto the Forensic Services Gateway for scientific assessment. The Forensic Services Gateway will undertake the following;

- Ensure the documentation is fit for purpose and meets the required standards
- Checks the scientific validity of the request
- Identifies any critical capacity issues and informs and initiates negotiations or renegotiations with PS and COPFS gateways regarding how said capacity issues effect accepted or pending submissions where there is a shortage of available capacity.
- Identifies the specific functions within FS that will be required to participate in the analysis to support downstream routing of casework, agree target dates and renegotiate as required Active Management of Submitted Requests/Instructions from PS and COPFS

As a result of this additional review by Forensic Services it was anticipated that the following benefits may be observed;

- Effective prioritisation of SFI both at the submission stage and through the lifetime of the investigation (via active case management)
- Reduction in the movement of unnecessary productions
- Increased effectiveness or evidential value
- Maximising the use of forensic services capacity
- Delivering best value utilisation of people, processes and technology

For the duration of the pilot it was agreed that the COPFS Gateway would assess solemn bail cases and decide on whether they would require triage (or scientific evaluation) by the Forensic Gateway. All submissions would be reviewed and rather than any cases being rejected there were suggestions for changes based upon the scientific evaluation of the submission by the Forensic Gateway. The final decision on analysis always resting with the COPFS gateway.

Evaluation of COPFS Submissions

The following was found from the pilot:

1. During the pilot approximately a third of cases were amended, these changes were not specific to any crime group and related to the removal or addition of productions and or analysis types

2. As with the Police Scotland submissions, review reduced the number of productions that were required to be transferred to the laboratory by 10%
3. Also as with Police Scotland there were found to be both scientific enhancements administrative enhancements in a quarter of submissions. Worthy of note that in 20% of submissions changes involved additions to the productions or test types – this was as a result of information available within Forensics own systems which COPFS may not have been aware of, this will enhance the quality of the forensic evidence provided.

Other Points of Note

The work also highlighted:

- An improvement in the quality of submissions being made by Police Scotland and COPFS
- There was little impact on the overall volumes of work being received by Forensic Services
- There is a requirement to stage evidence types i.e. carrying out finger print analysis first and wait before submission of DNA

Overall Evaluation

In addition to the measures identified specific to Police Scotland and COPFS the impact of the pilot of the processes within Forensic Services has been evaluated. These opportunities cover:

- Process of receipting cases in the forensic casework management systems at a pre submission stage
- Routing of productions and reduction of unnecessary analysis
- Scientific strategy setting

Active Case Management

One of the aims of the pilot was to explore and formalise the current ad-hoc informal review arrangements that exist between the JNFG partners for the active case management of accepted and approved submissions throughout their lifecycle within Forensic Services.

Recommendation

It is clear that there is value in supporting a permanent establishment of staff from Forensic Services into the JNFG. The Forensic Gateway would have a robust support structure of scientific staff that would provide a service to the JNFG on an agreed basis, resourced from the scientific teams based at the SCC.