

Meeting	Forensic Services Committee
Date	2 February 2022
Location	MS Teams
Title of Paper	Forensic Services Director's Report
Presented By	Fiona Douglas, Director Forensic Services
Recommendation to Members	For noting
Appendix Attached	No

PURPOSE

To update members on the recent key activities across Forensic Services

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report is to update members on activities across Forensic Services during the past few months.

2. UPDATES

COVID working arrangements

- 2.1 SPA Forensic Services continues to work closely with Operation Talla to ensure all staff continue to work in a safe environment. In December, Forensic Services staff reverted swiftly to the previous two-metre physical distancing arrangements across the SPA/PS estate as COVID case numbers rose across Scotland. Where possible, staff continue to work from home.
- 2.2 The Op Talla Health & Safety group highlighted how COVID cases still appear to be arising from contacts outside work. While the health, wellbeing, and safety of all staff remains our priority, we continue to work with People & Development colleagues on developing future working arrangements.

Remote evidence for High Court hearings

- 2.3 To reduce the footfall in court buildings, the Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service have reached an understanding with criminal justice partners, including the defence community, to increase the number of police and professional witnesses giving evidence remotely and to make that the default position for the time-being.
- 2.4 We have worked with Police Scotland colleagues to make available around 60 locations throughout Scotland where evidence can be given remotely with the required IT systems in place.

Staff consultation

- 2.5 I will be taking the proposals for restructuring the Forensic Services Senior Management Team to the Joint Negotiation and Consultation Committee (JNCC) later this month so that we can start the consultation process with members of the FS SMT as soon as possible.
- 2.6 Group and individual consultation for all staff impacted by the proposed changes in the New Operating Model for Forensic Services

started in November with 90% of staff receiving a virtual briefing from a member of the SMT. Consultation will run for several months allowing staff further opportunity to develop the proposals.

Appointments to support change programme

- 2.7 Many of significant resourcing gaps in the Project Management Office have now been filled with the appointment of a new Programme Manager, Senior Project Manager, two Project Managers and three Business Change Analysts. SPA Forensic Services now has an improved and substantial change function supported by Police Scotland to ensure robust management of the change programme within Forensic Services.

Project Weaver (transfer of Post Mortem Toxicology Services)

- 2.8 This project continues to make good progress with the support of colleagues in Police Scotland, while there are a number of challenges that need to be worked through the project is running on time for the service to transition to Forensic Services for a 1st December 2022 start.
- 2.9 In December, the Police Scotland Portfolio Assurance Team carried out a Health Check on the progress of Project Weaver which gave it a positive review with no critical issues reported. It made five recommendations which will be taken forward by the Project Weaver team.

DNA link in terrorism case

- 2.10 A former Greek serviceman, Nikolaos Karvounakis, 35, last month admitted leaving potentially explosive device in Princes Street Gardens in Edinburgh, which was found on 11 January 2018. The High Court in Edinburgh heard how his DNA had been found on adhesive tape in the device.
- 2.11 He claimed to be a member of the International Terrorist Mafia - a Mexican eco-terror group and pleaded guilty to being in possession of items for a terrorist purpose. Karvounakis was remanded in custody ahead of sentencing.

Ministerial Round table on spiking

- 2.12 Alastair Patience took part in a Ministerial Round table on the spiking of drinks and drugs in December led by the Justice Secretary. It included representatives from Police Scotland, COPFS and a number of justice, health, education and charity bodies to help co-ordinate the response across Scotland as well as the health and public messaging.
- 2.13 We will play our part in supporting the response to tackling Spiking in Scotland. The Forensic Services Toxicology team continue to give guidance and carry out sample analysis for Police Scotland colleagues but this work will never be able to provide a simple solution to what is an extremely complicated multi-layered problem.

Lawful Business Monitoring

- 2.14 Lawful Business Monitoring (LBM) - an auditing tool that will assist the Scottish Police Authority in the protection of our staff, systems and data – was introduced from 1st January 2022.
- 2.15 LBM assists in the intelligence-led investigation of criminal and corrupt activity and enables the Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland to mitigate the threat of internal corruption and to safeguard our reputation and integrity with monitoring and recording computer-based activity of SPA and PS staff and Officers.

Your Voice Matters Survey

- 2.16 The SMT have now had a briefing from the Durham University academic responsible for organising the Your Voice Matters Survey and we have been working with colleagues in P&D on how we take this forward and will be engaging with staff on how we build these findings into the delivery of our strategy and change programme.

Launch of the updated strategy

- 2.17 In February we will be launching the updated Forensic Strategy, approved by the SPA last year, with our staff and stakeholders as well as political, academic and other key influencers across forensic science.
- 2.18 We have already started our work on embedding the updated strategy into our strategic business planning. SMT colleagues have

started creating business plans to support the strategic outcomes and this will shape our future work and plans.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no financial implications in this report.

4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no personnel implications associated with this paper.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no legal implications associated with this paper.

6. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no reputational implications associated with this paper.

7. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no social implications associated with this paper.

8. COMMUNITY IMPACT

8.1 There are no community implications associated with this paper.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no equality implications associated with this paper.

10. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no environmental implications associated with this paper.

RECOMMENDATION

Members are requested to note the information contained within this report.