

Meeting	SPA Authority Meeting
Date	23 February 2022
Location	MS Teams
Title of Paper	Forensic Services Director's Report
Presented By	Fiona Douglas, Director Forensic Services
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached	

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 SPA Forensic Services.

2. UPDATES

Staff consultation

- 2.1 The proposals for restructuring the Forensic Services Senior Management Team were discussed at the Joint Negotiation and Consultation Committee (JNCC) earlier this month and the consultation process with members of the FS SMT has now started.
- 2.2 Group and individual consultation for all FS staff who are impacted by the proposed changes in the New Operating Model for Forensic Services started last November - with 90% of staff attending virtual briefings from members of the SMT. This consultation will run for a number of months allowing staff further opportunities to develop the current proposals.
- 2.3 As well as the group and personal consultation meetings, we have also launched a series of regular more informal meetings led by the director and members of the SMT. All members of staff can attend and ask any questions or raise any issues they want. These meetings are in addition to the great deal of support already on offer to all staff including from the Forensic Services Change Team, line managers, People & Development, FS Change Agent Network, trade unions representatives as well as extensive welfare support available.

Appointments to support change programme

- 2.4 We are very grateful for the ongoing support from Police Scotland for the FS change programme which means we now have an improved and substantial change function to ensure robust management of our change programme within Forensic Services. This has helped us to fill many of the significant resourcing gaps in the Project Management Office with the appointment of a new Programme Manager, Senior Project Manager, two Project Managers and three Business Change Analysts.

Ministerial Round table on spiking

- 2.5 We continue to play our part in supporting the response to tackling Spiking in Scotland. The Forensic Services Toxicology team 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.
- 2.6 The Interim Head of Physical Sciences took part in a Ministerial Round table on the spiking of drinks and drugs in December which was led by the Justice Secretary. This included representatives from Police Scotland, COPFS and a number of justice, health, education and charity bodies and helps co-ordinate the response across Scotland as well as the health and public messaging.

Drug-driving analysis

- 2.7 Demand for Section 5A drug driving analysis remains significantly higher than Forensic Services capacity, with the caseload remaining at an elevated level. Outsourcing of Section 5A cases has continued since and additional funding was approved by the Scottish Government in November 2021, which will allow c.900 cases to be completed.
- 2.8 Marginal gains, with modest capacity increases have been implemented or are being taken forward, but these initiatives will not solve the underlying issue of high demand. The FS Operating Model project includes a potential increase in capacity for Toxicology services, however, there remains a significant shortfall in capacity based on ongoing forecasting work undertaken by Police Scotland and Forensic Services.
- 2.9 Building on workshop-based discussions with partners, further dialogue with Police Scotland and COPFS has helped scope and clarify what options could be considered for the provision of a longer-term, sustainable, model for drugs driving toxicology services and a tri-partite position paper will shortly be submitted to the Scottish Government for consideration.

Project Weaver (transfer of Post Mortem Toxicology Services from Glasgow University to Forensic Services)

- 2.10 This project continues to make good progress with the support of colleagues from Police Scotland and close liaison with COPFS and the University of Glasgow. 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.
- 2.11 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

- 2.12 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.
- 2.13 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.

Your Voice Matters Survey

- 2.14 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 any additional findings into the delivery of our strategy and change programme.

Launch of the updated strategy

- 2.17 This month 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.

Measuring the value of Forensic Services

- 2.19 Following the last meeting of the Forensic Services Committee a working group is in the process of being established to consider how best to measure the significant value Forensic Services adds to the criminal justice system. The working group, which includes a member of the SPA Forensic Services Committee, will invite stakeholders and experts from a wide variety of justice bodies and academia to support its work.
- 2.20 There has been some work by external groups to look at ways that could be used to measure the value of forensic science. The working group will look to build on such work at Ulster University and Home Office.

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.