



<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Forensic Services Committee</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> May 2023</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>MS Teams</b>
<b>Title of Paper</b>	<b>3.2 Forensic Services Performance Report – Q4</b>
<b>Presented By</b>	<b>Fiona Douglas</b>
<b>Recommendation to Members</b>	<b>For Discussion</b>
<b>Appendix Attached</b>	<b>No</b>

**PURPOSE**

To present Forensic Services Performance Report, Q4 2022/23 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 Business Performance Report is presented for Q4 2022/23.
- 1.2 This report captures conducted activity across SPA Forensic Services. This performance evidence also informs the content of the Authority's quarterly Strategic Police Plan Delivery Review and the Annual Review of Policing 2022/23.
- 1.3 The report demonstrates SPA 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.

## **2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

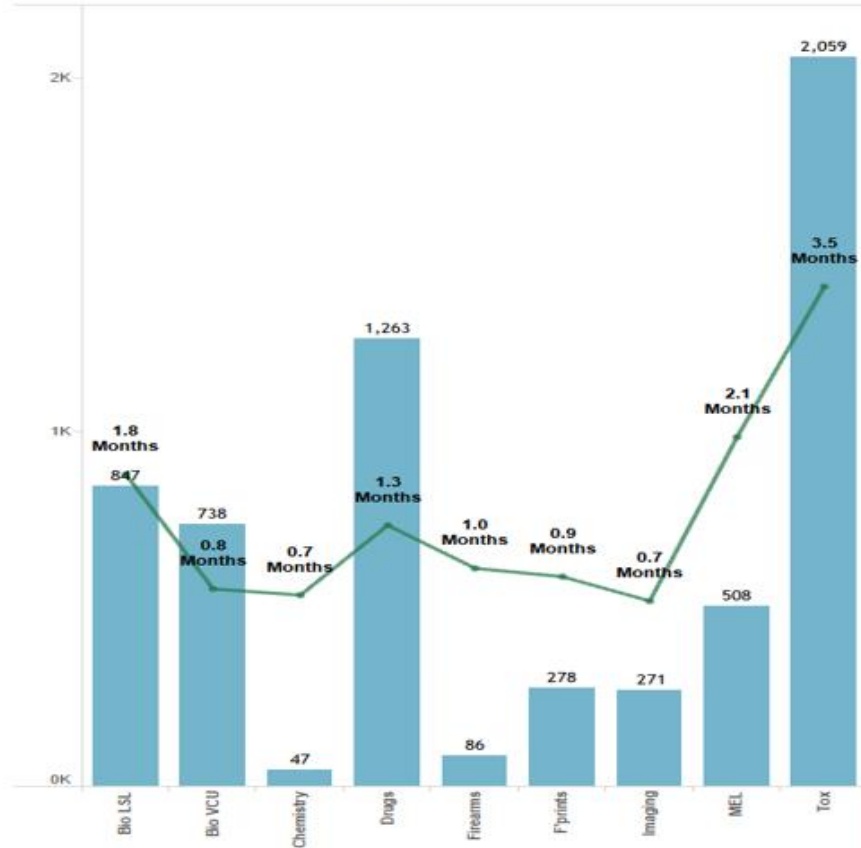
- 2.1 On the 3rd April the new Scene Tasking Unit was launched and work is ongoing with the team to begin to realise the benefits this will deliver moving into the new way of working. This new unit will nationally manage the deployment of scene examiners in a consistent and effective way across the country.
- 2.2 On the 3<sup>rd</sup> April the first phase of the DNA centralisation project, rationalising DNA processing labs from four to two sites also went live. The Edinburgh laboratory now submit their DNA analysis to the Scottish Crime Campus in Gartcosh. A post implementation review will be undertaken ahead of further phases of change to assess the success of the new process.
- 2.3 Forensic Services have seen an increase in demand from Q3 to Q4. This is notable in Biology, Volume Crime Unit, and Firearms and to a lesser extent in Imaging and Drugs.
- 2.4 The focus on reducing the age of cases across Forensic Services has been successful during Q4 with the exception of MEL and Volume crime. With the exception of Toxicology, every unit is on track to meet the KPIs set for the financial year. This means Forensic Services is a strong performance position as we bring in changes to deliver the New Operating Model.
- 2.5 Both Biology and Toxicology continue to see an increase in demand particularly in Group 2 crime (sexual offences and crimes of

indecentcy) and Group 7 (traffic offences). While output in Biology is within demand levels, it has not been possible to reduce the backlog significantly.

- 2.6 There have been some resilience issues with the relatively small number - 15 people – in Chemistry, primarily due to an increased number of fire investigation cases and scene attendances by scientists.
- 2.7 Criminal Toxicology continues to be supported by Biology, Chemistry, Drugs and Business Support to increase staff resilience in this area. Additional recruitment is ongoing to backfill and increase staff numbers. The UKAS visit to Toxicology on the 27<sup>th</sup> March went exceptionally well with only 5 actions raised. Outsourcing of Toxicology cases continues and the performance of the external forensic provider is being monitored closely.
- 2.8 Within Scene Examination cross-divisional working remains high, with the scenes attended outside of base division increasing by 4% to 40% of scenes (579 of 1463 scenes). This is mainly in the East and West sites as only 2% of cross divisional work occurs in the North (7 of 307 scenes in March).
- 2.9 Our new Post Mortem Toxicology service continues to work closely with COPFS to complete cases to agreed timescales. The team continues to outsource cases to ensure smooth transition and to facilitate validation and method development activity.
- 2.10 Forensic Services absence rate is lower than last year with a decrease from Q3 to Q4 (6.13% and 5.8% respectively). Psychological absence has increased across Forensic Services from Q3 to Q4. The procurement phase of the psychological supervision project is complete with initial meetings scheduled to discuss communications and engagement and to identify priority candidate groups.
- 2.11 The launch of the Performance Framework, including a refresh of the KPIs, will result in a new format for future reports.
- 2.12 In summary, Forensic Services ends the performance year in the strongest position for many years and well-placed to drive forward the implementation of our New Operating Model.

### 3.1 Forensic Services – Overall position By unit for 31 March 2023

Forensic Services - Laboratory Casework  
Open Cases - end Q4 22-23 with average age

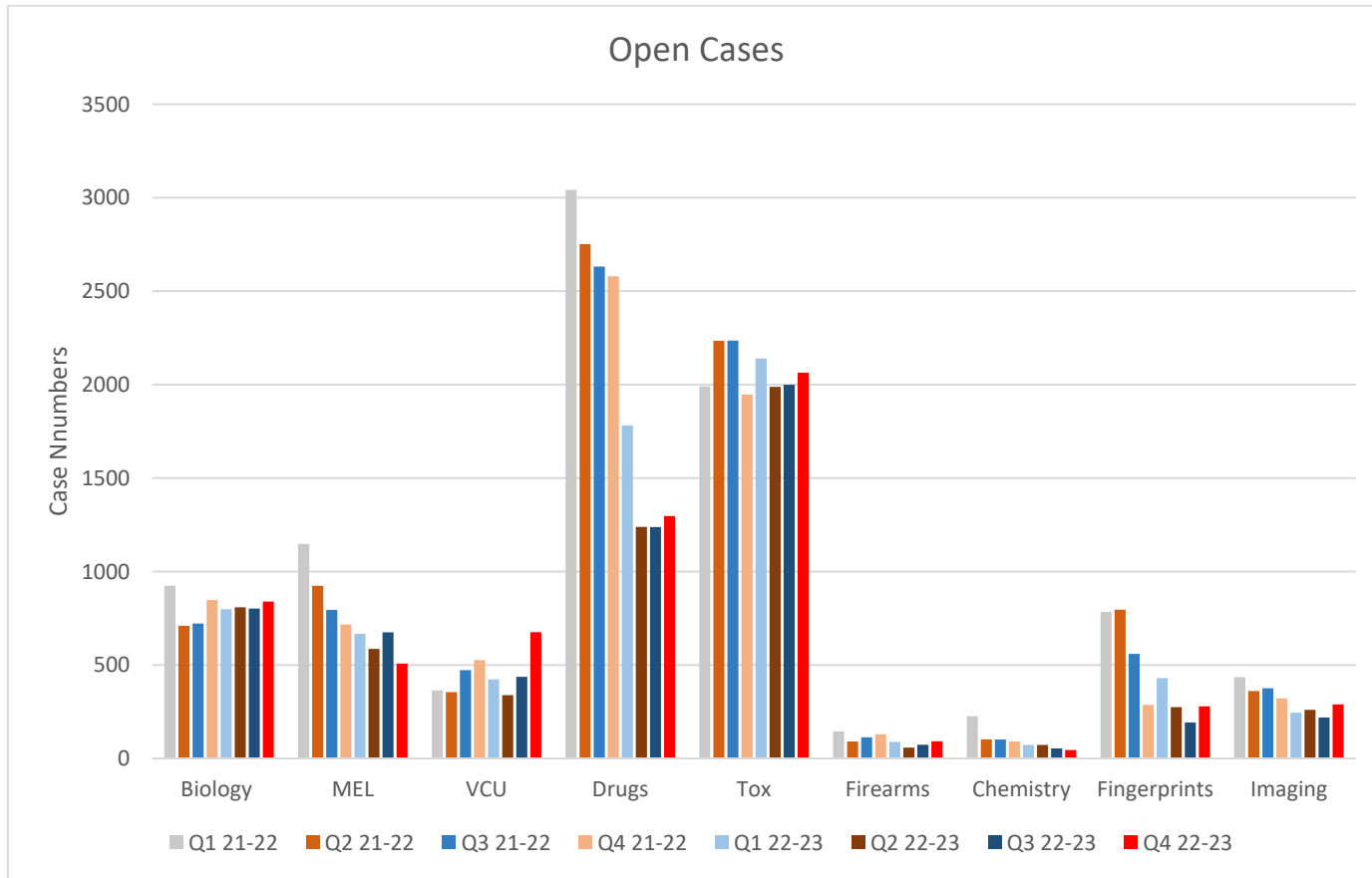


The open casework chart shows the number of open cases within each area of Forensic Services – this is represented by the blue bar in the chart.

The average age (months) of the cases within this caseload is shown by the green line.

Q3 to Q4 comparison		
UNIT	Open casework	Average case age
Tox	↑	↓
Mark Enhancement	↓	↔
Imaging	↑	↓
Fingerprints	↑	↓
Firearms	↑	↓
Drugs	↔	↓
Chemistry	↓	↓
Bio – volume crime unit	↑	↔
Biology	↑	↓

### 3.2 Forensic Services – Open casework by unit per Quarter



This chart shows the trend in the volume of the caseload month on month in each area of Forensic Services for the past two years.

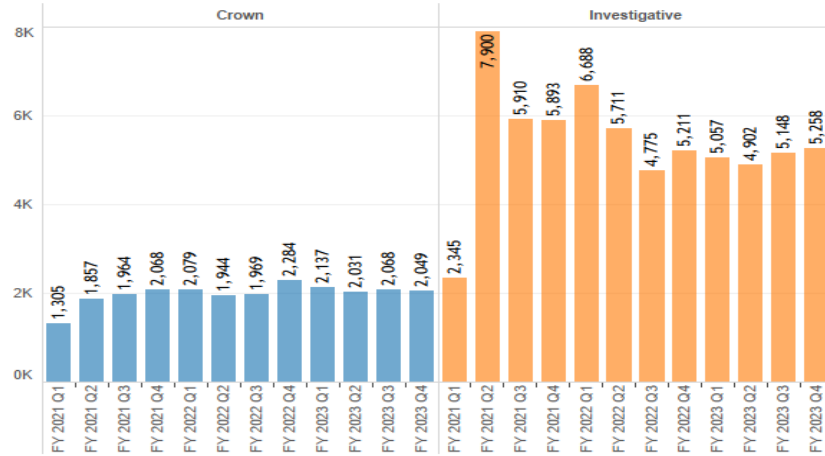
Reductions in caseload has been delivered in Drugs (significant), Fingerprints, Chemistry and MEL.

Firearms, Toxicology and Imaging are stable within an acceptable range.

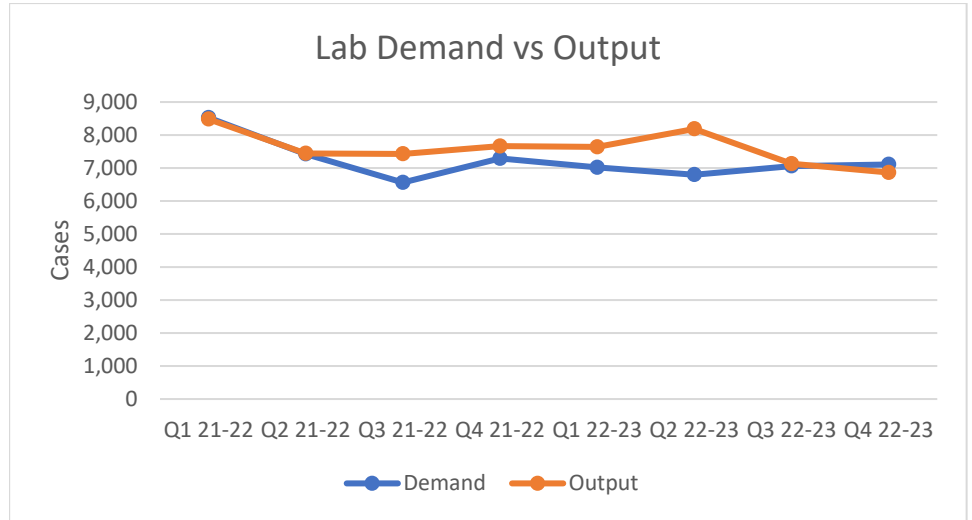
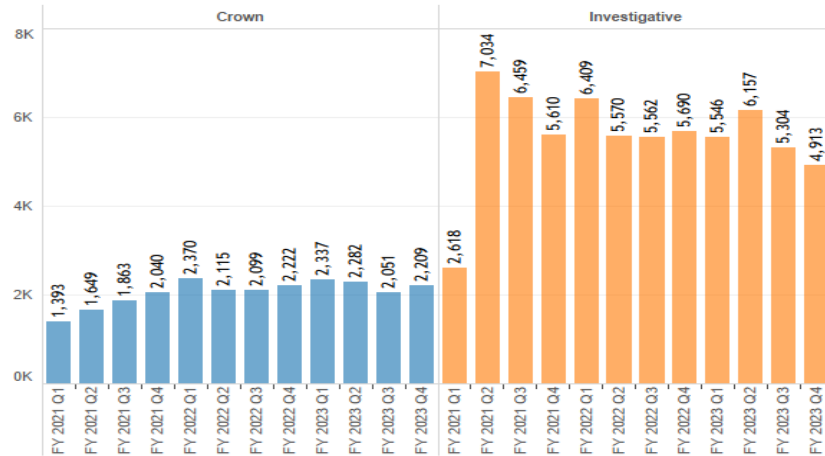
The VCU caseload has increased during Q4 due to a reduction in staff availability.

### 3.3 Forensic Services – Demand and output by COPFS and Police Scotland per quarter

Casework Demand Fiscal Year 20-21 (FY 2021) onwards



Casework Output Fiscal Year 20-21 (FY 2021) onwards

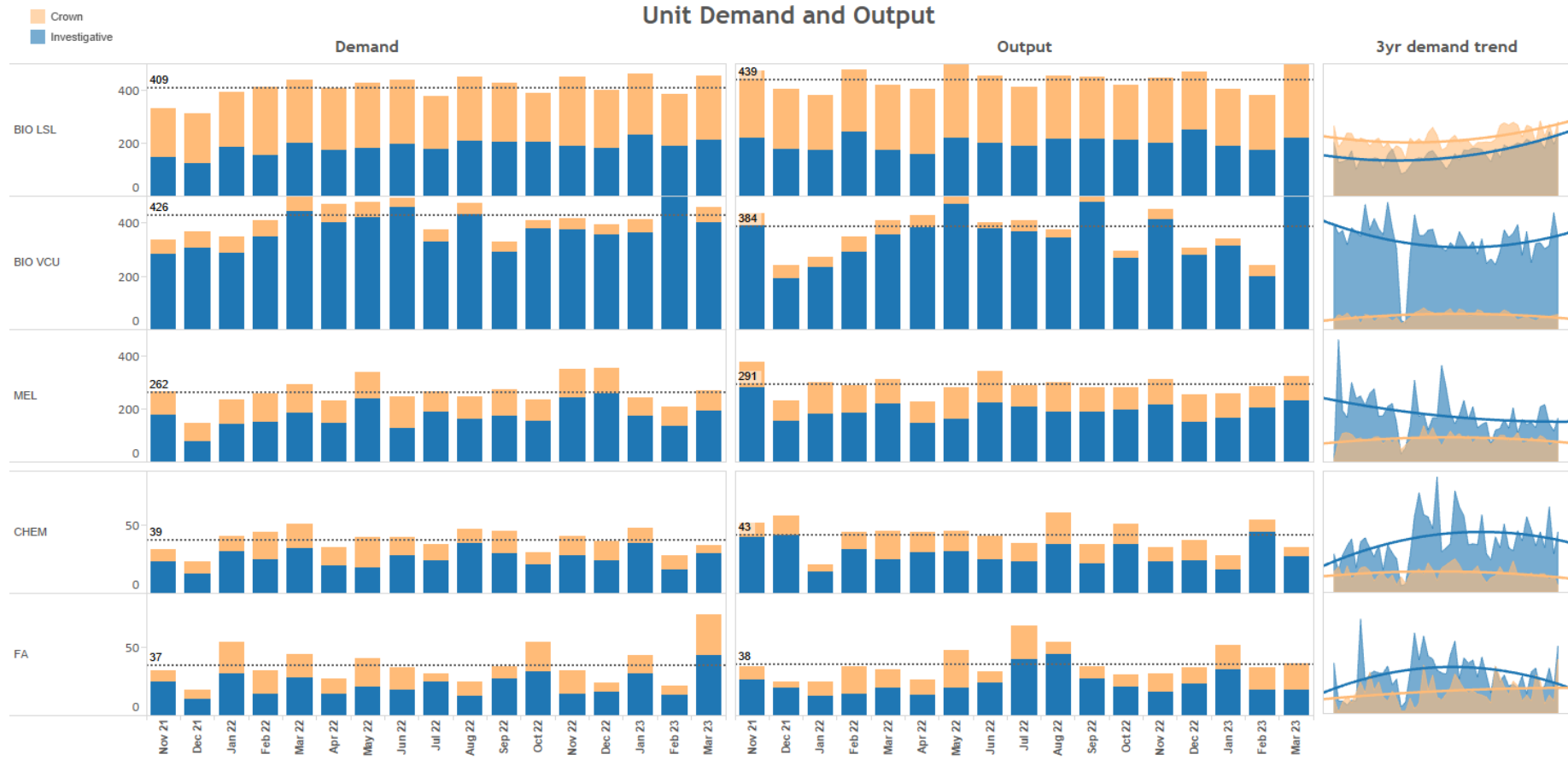


The charts show the overall casework demand and output relating to COPFS (Crown) and Police Scotland (Investigative). This data shows the trend for each quarter over the previous three years.

The demand from COPFS remains largely static over the period. Overall during the year there has been an increase in demand from Police Scotland, however, this did reduce slightly in Q4.

There was a hold on recruitment through Q3/Q4 due to potential budgetary constraints. Staff were moved to cover business critical areas while recruitment was on hold.

### 3.4 Forensic Services – Demand and output by Crown and Investigative per month per unit



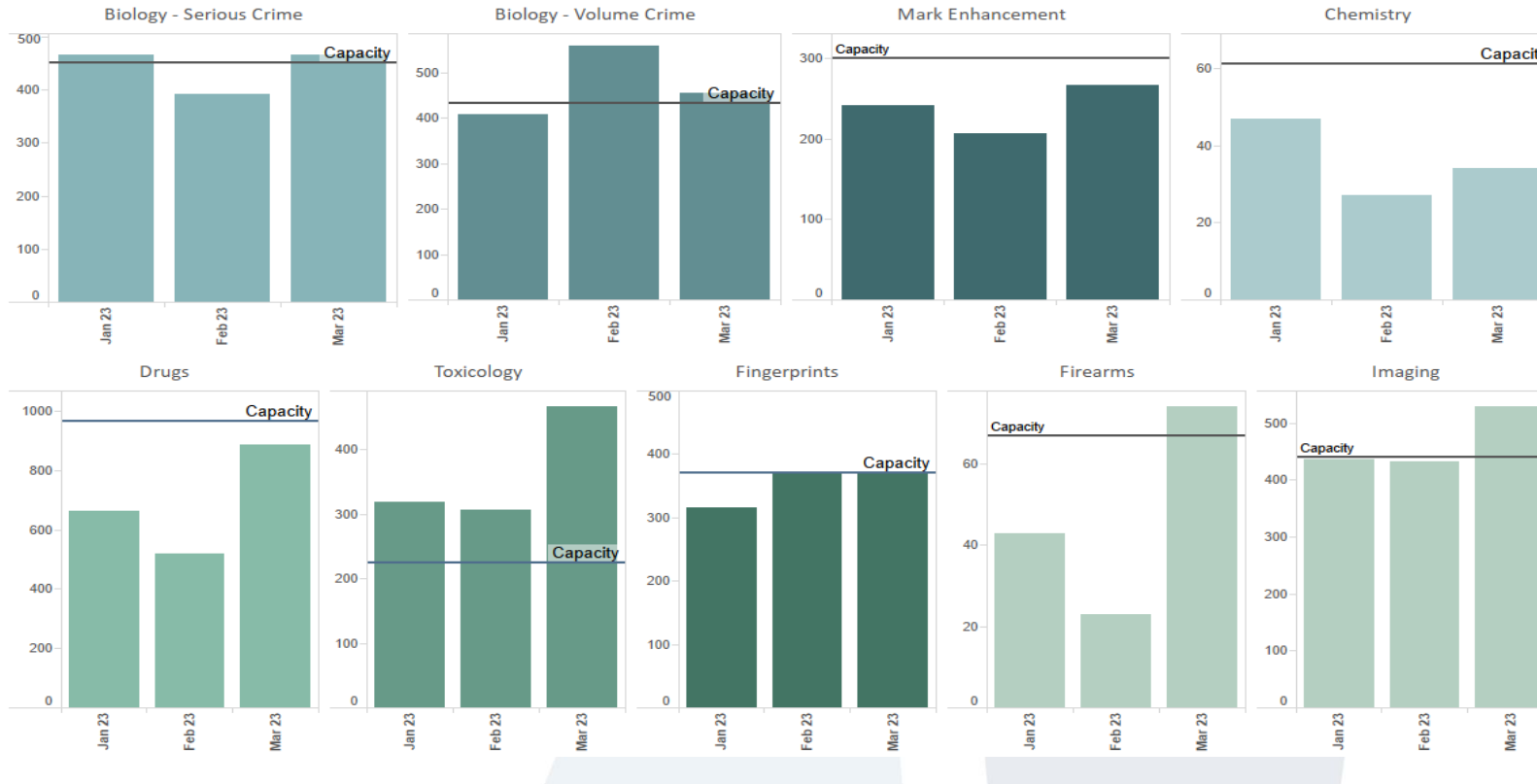


These charts show the demand for each area split between COPFS (Crown) and Police Scotland (Investigative) since 2021. In addition, the three-year demand trend is shown in the charts on the right. Imaging data is not available for the full three-year period.

Further work within each business area with the FS National Gateway continues to improve the case triaging and ensuring only relevant productions are submitted for examination.



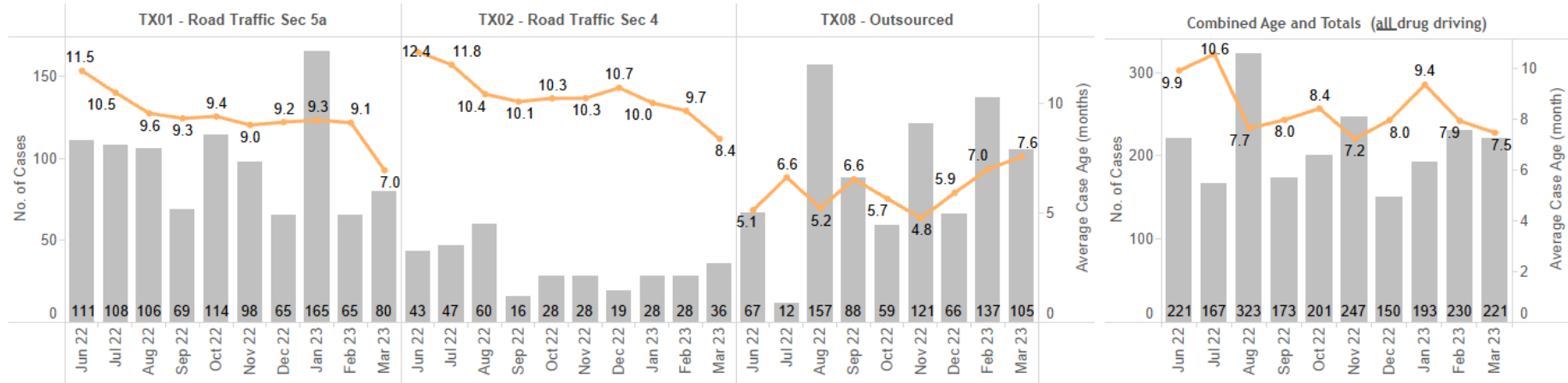
### 3.5 Forensic Services – Laboratory demand against capacity



These charts show the demand for casework during the previous three-months across the different areas within Forensic Services. The estimated capacity of each unit is shown by the blue line. The capacity levels will be reviewed for the next FY due to resource movement within each of the business areas to meet demand and service requirements.

### 3.6.1 Forensic Services – Criminal Toxicology update - Timeliness

Completed Sec 4, 5A and Outsourced Casework by Month of Completion



The reporting age of Section 5A cases has continued to reduce since summer 2022 in line with the Toxicology development and outsourcing plans. All in-house cases with a pre-2023 incident date are expected to be completed by April 2023. Thereafter, the unit will be working to a KPI where S5A cases will be completed within 3 months from receipt into the laboratory. A downward trend in case ageing is shown with Section 4 cases, though the rate of decline is slower due to the added complexity of S4 cases within this work stream.

In-house output through Q1 and Q2 of 2023-4 is anticipated to be relatively low as staff are abstracted for planned instrumentation development, validation and training. This is in line with the Toxicology development and outsourcing plan to anticipate and manage the capacity gap.

The number, and subsequently reported age, of completed outsourced cases is pacing slightly behind plan following unforeseen capacity issues with the contracted supplier. The supplier has a recovery plan in place which should see performance issues resolved by Q2 2023-24.

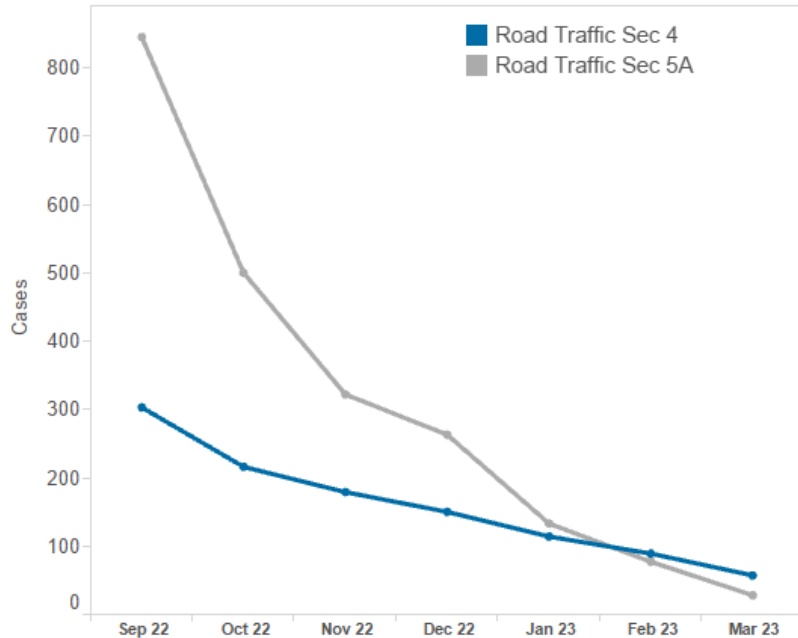
### 3.6.2 Forensic Services – Criminal Toxicology update - Outsourcing



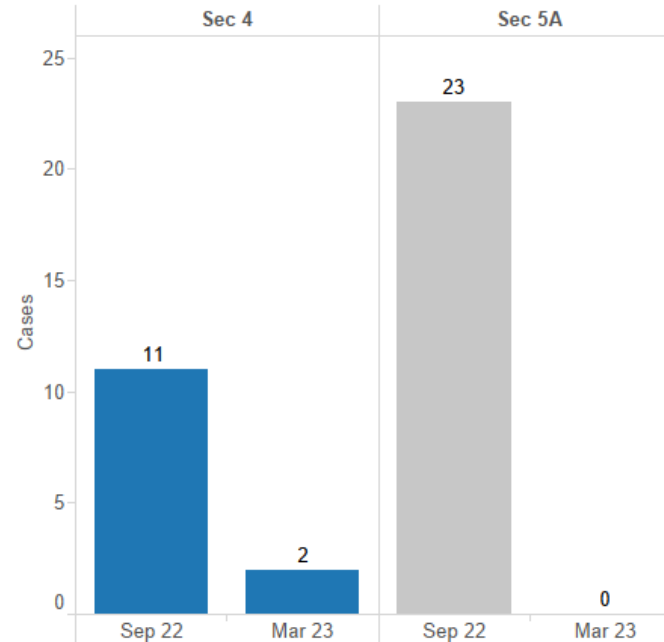
A total of 1700 drug driving cases have been supplied to outsourcing providers between October 2022 and March 2023. Some monthly variation between target and actual exists due to the pace and nature of cases provided to Forensics, but the final figure of 1700 is close to the estimate of delivering up to 1750 cases through the contract. Planned outsourcing for 2023/24 is in the process of being finalised with the supplier and Scottish Government have confirmed funding to support this.

### 3.6.3 Forensic Services – Criminal Toxicology update - Caseload

Open Drug Driving Casework (in-house analysis)  
no. of cases remaining open by end of calendar month



Open cases dated 42 weeks or more from incident  
(approaching statutory time limit)

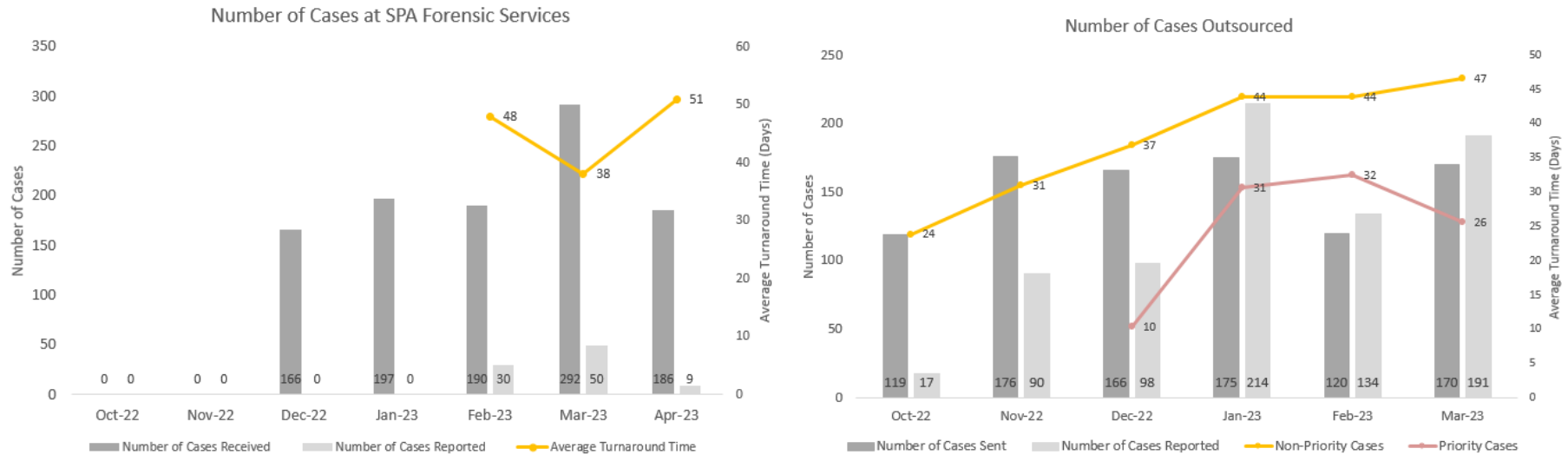


Volumes of outstanding drug driving casework for completion at the Edinburgh Laboratory have decreased markedly since summer 2022 (data here measured from Sep 22 when the development plan was implemented). Output has been lower than anticipated for some months over Q3/4. Consequently, more Section 4 cases are currently open than initially expected; these will be addressed in April 2023.

As of the end of Q4, only two active cases were within the 10-week window approaching the statutory time limit (one year from the date of road traffic incident). This represents a substantial drop from September when the position was 34 cases, and from June when over 130 cases fell within this age band.

**No** drug driving cases have been identified as failing to progress to prosecution since September 2022 due to laboratory delays.

### 3.6.4 Forensic Services – Post Mortem Toxicology update



Post Mortem Toxicology services transitioned to Forensic Services on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022 through the successful delivery of Project Weaver. Initial weeks/months focused on the induction of all new staff members (23) and the writing, and implementation, of a new branch of the Quality Management System. In addition the method development and validation activity have been ongoing, with the Alcohol test signed-off on the 10<sup>th</sup> February 2023, allowing reporting of the first cases. A successful recommendation for accreditation by UKAS was granted on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2023, pending provision of actions raised. Since then 89 alcohol only post mortem toxicology cases have been reported by Forensic Services.

Sequential analysis is required for the testing of drugs in post mortem casework with a further three tests as a minimum followed by another 1-6 different tests. To date, the validation of five of 10 tests has been completed, and analysis of casework samples has commenced. There was a delay in this validation work due to earlier Project Weaver delays, and an unanticipated issue in the laboratory which has now been resolved. Validation of the outstanding methods will be completed by end April 2023 and will then allow all post mortem casework to be progressed and reported.

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An outsourcing contract between COPFS and external post mortem toxicology suppliers has been in place during implementation to reduce the risk to service delivery and this outsourcing has continued. The number of cases outsourced and reported is shown above.

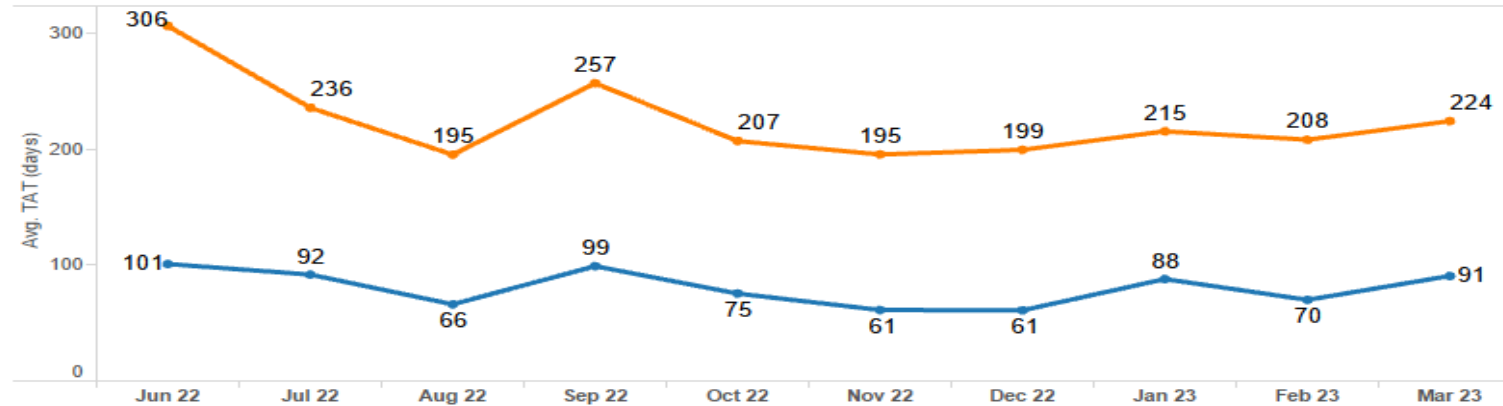
Due to the ongoing validation activity and the capacity for outsourcing, there has been an impact on turnaround times for the more complex cases. This has increased from an average timeliness of <2 months to 4 months. It is anticipated that this will return to <2 months by July 2023. Engagement with COPFS and Pathologists has continued throughout this transition to ensure that service levels are monitored and clarity on reporting timeframes over the period through to steady state.

Post mortem toxicology results are included in the annual statistics of deaths published by Scottish Government with data from the National Records of Scotland (NRS). Forensic Services continue to work closely with COPFS, Pathologists, NRS and Scottish Government to prioritise this activity.

### 3.7 Forensic Services – Mark Enhancement update

#### Mark Enhancement - Investigative internal turnaround times

time in days for cases to be reported from package of work creation, measured as monthly average, and as 95% of monthly cases



Additional triaging by managers and FS National Gateway staff is leading to a reduction in production levels within case submissions.

A recovery plan to improve timeliness and capacity within each of the two sites is in progress. Recent recruitment and further potential recruitment will assist the team resilience.

Cross-functional support from other business areas, such as fingerprints, will ensure that demand continues to be met particularly as training of new staff in Q1/Q2 occurs.

Open casework has reduced while maintaining the average age of cases in progress. The level of open work has decreased significantly from Q4 last year to this year (717 cases reduced to 508 cases). This is despite only a marginal, 2%, drop in demand from 2021-22 to 2022-23. This marginal change is within the range of natural fluctuation.

### **3.8 Forensic Services – Scene Examination update**

Forensic Services prioritises scene attendance requests taking into account:

- Crime/event type
- Risk of loss of potential forensic evidence
- Presence of a Police Scotland Crime Scene Manager (generally more serious scenes)
- Skills and competence required by the attending Scene Examiner
- Impact on Police Scotland resource (e.g. Police Officer standing by)

Scene Examination resource level may influence the attendance timescales/sequence but does not affect the prioritisation.

All incidents where a Police Scotland Crime Scene Manager is deployed, other serious crime, critical incident scenes, and those requested by the PIRC are always defined as higher priority.

Less serious crime scenes will be prioritised taking into account:

- Restricted availability of victim/complainer/accused.
- Proximity to other existing scene requests
- Risk of loss of potential forensic evidence.

We also prioritise scenes where the public are affected to try to minimise disruption, such as scenes relating to:

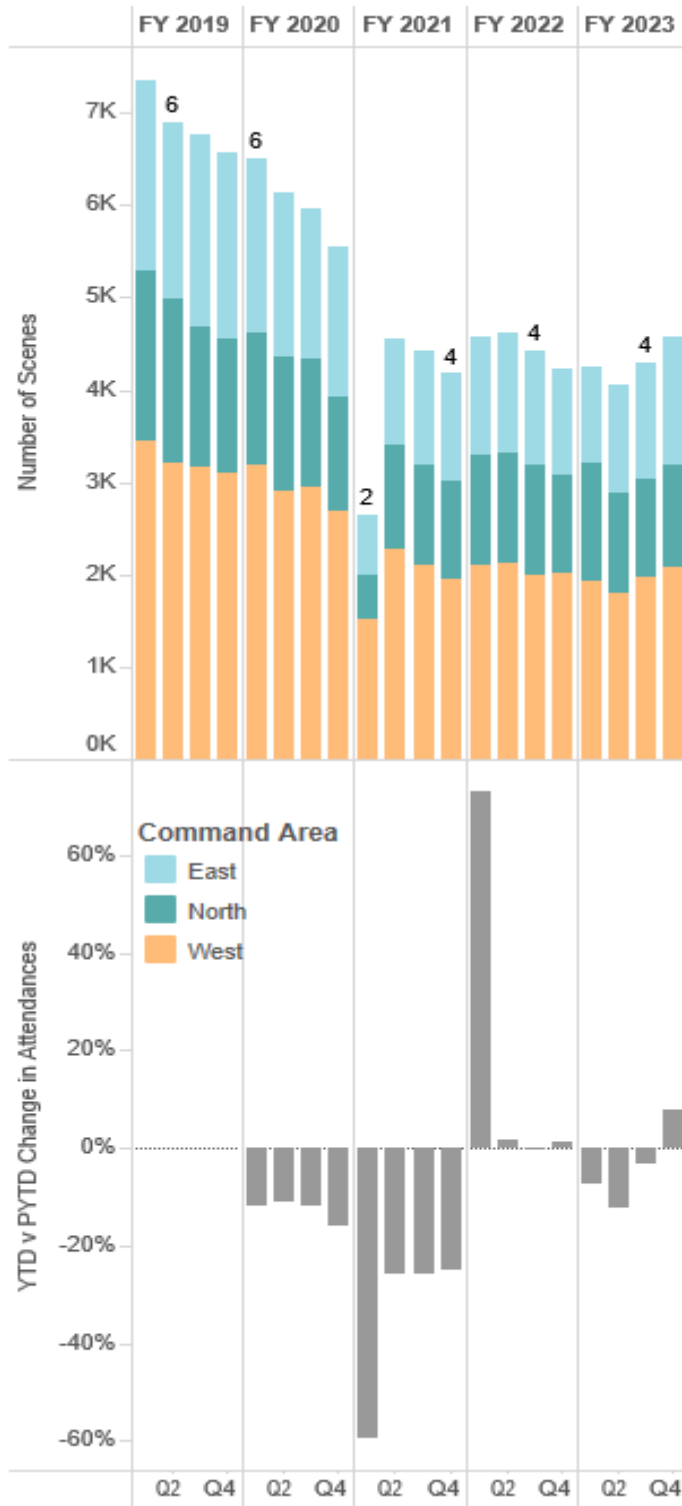
- Common stairs
- Streets/paths

We prioritise other attendances, such as Post Mortems to support the small team of Pathologists to maximise their efficiency.

Lower level crime scenes, which generally result in limited forensic value, are not routinely attended unless Police Scotland demonstrate potential for forensic evidence recovery.



### 3.8.1 Forensic Services – Number of Scenes attended



The graph indicates the trend in scene attendances over the past five years.

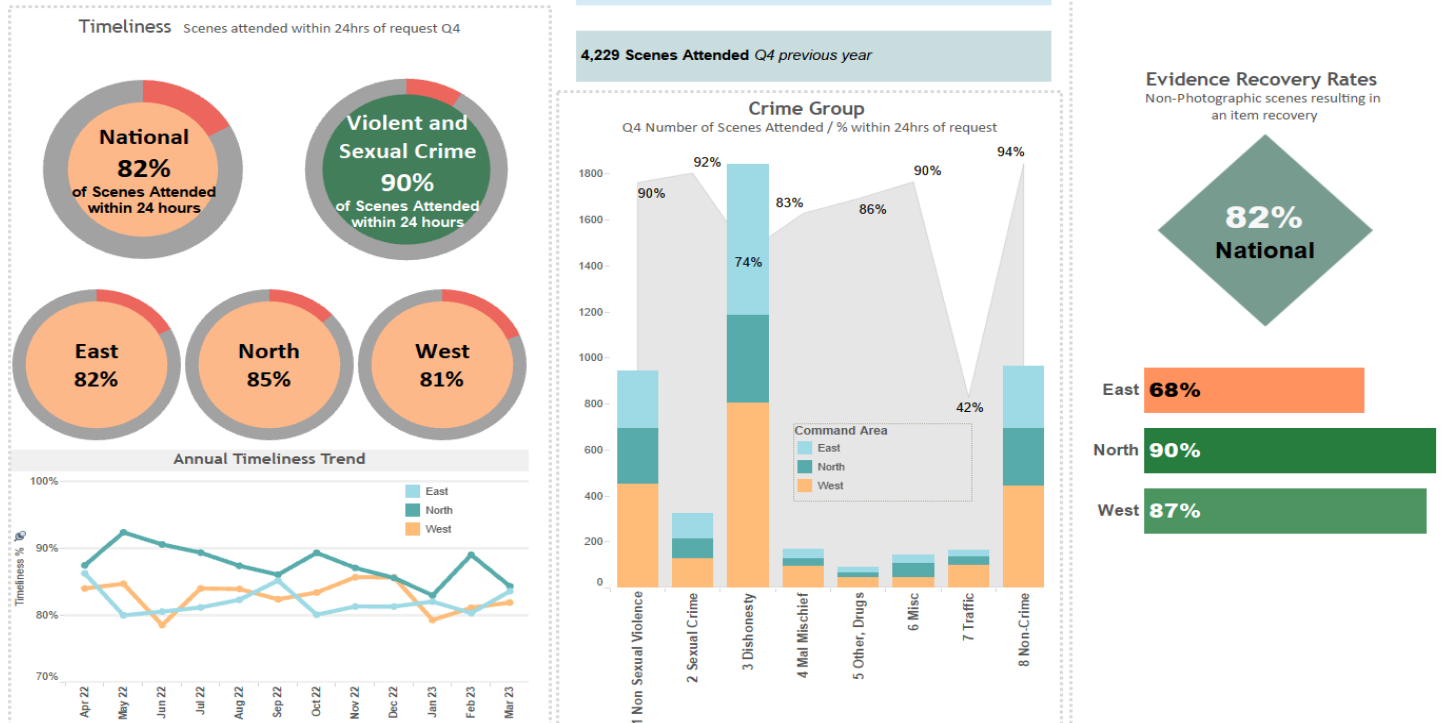
The reduction in part is explained by the triage of scenes whereby Forensic Services can add value.

Work regarding the consistency of attending the same types of scenes is ongoing between each of the command areas. The greatest difference has been achieved in the West.

The graph indicates the trend in scene attendances comparing 2021-22 and 2022-23. As expected the spiky nature of demand is evident, hence a requirement for staff resilience to meet service demand.

### 3.8.2 Forensic Services – Number of Scenes attended

#### Forensic Services - Scene Examination Unit Quarterly Performance Q4 22-23



There has been a 7% increase in scenes attended from Q3 to Q4 and an 8% increase over Q4 last year. There has been a small increase (2%) in the number of violent and sexual crime scenes attended within 24 hours of request albeit a similar reduction in overall attendance nationally. Long-term absences remain at eight; there has been some churn within that figure and are being managed actively with assistance from P&D. The number of SE staff on restricted duties has increased from 7 to 11 since Q3; there is again some movement within that figure. To maintain service, cross-area working is still being proactively carried out with 40% (579) of scenes attended from outwith the locus division. This figure will be monitored to quantify the impact of the new Tasking Unit which went live on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2023.

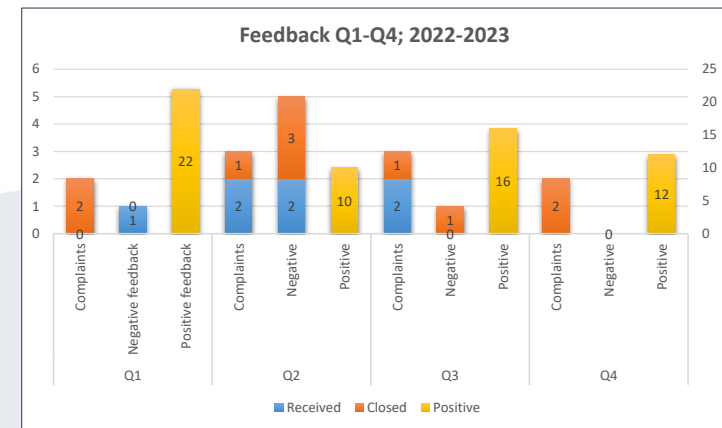
### 3.9 Forensic Services – Quality Management System & Accreditation

#### Accreditation Summary

- All submitted UKAS evidence was accepted for the Surveillance assessment of 2022-2023. Forensic Services SPA are now awaiting formal communication of maintenance of accreditation from UKAS.
- Forensic Services also received confirmation of the award of accreditation for extension to accredited scope for Quant Trio at the SCC.
- A planned follow up UKAS assessment of Toxicology and Management System activity at the Edinburgh laboratory was performed on Mon 27 Mar 2023 to assess the continued improvement in drug driving and alcohol analysis caseloads and review the improvement planning work. This was a very positive assessment.
- The UKAS assessment of Post Mortem Toxicology was conducted on Tue 28 Mar- Wed 29 Mar 2023. This assessment included the J24 laboratory site, implementation of the Forensic Services Management System as well as the technical testing activity.
- UKAS confirmed the recommendation of accreditation for analysis of alcohol at the J24 laboratory site subject to satisfactory close out of the findings.
- 2023 UKAS Surveillance assessments:  
 02-06 Oct 2023: Edinburgh and SCC – Fingerprint comparison  
 09-13 Oct 2023: Aberdeen  
 23-27 Oct 2023: Dundee  
 06-07 Nov 2023: Edinburgh  
 13-17 Nov 2023: Glasgow (SCC)

#### Complaints and Feedback

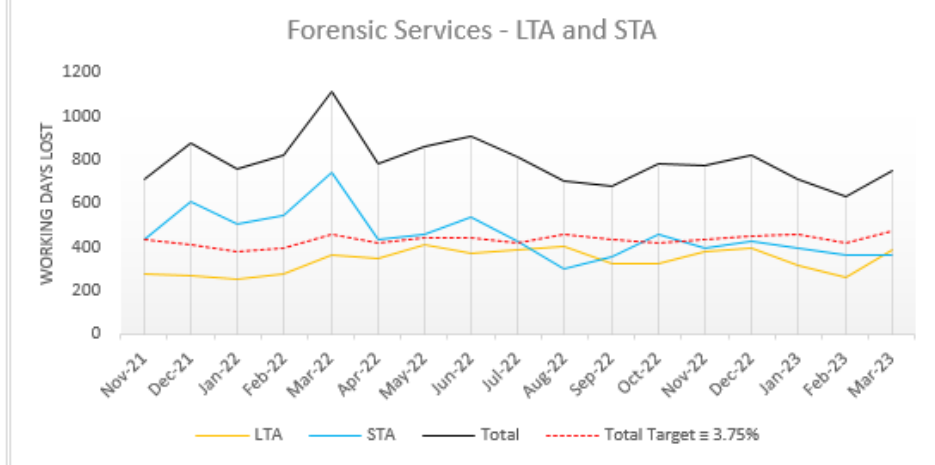
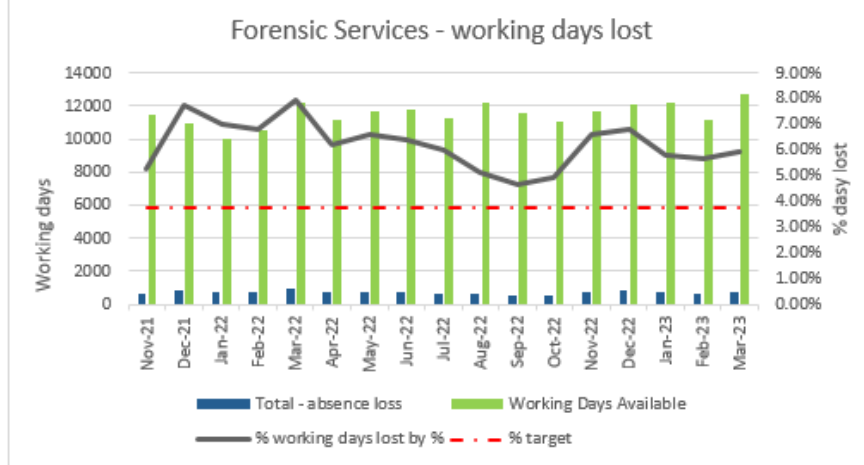
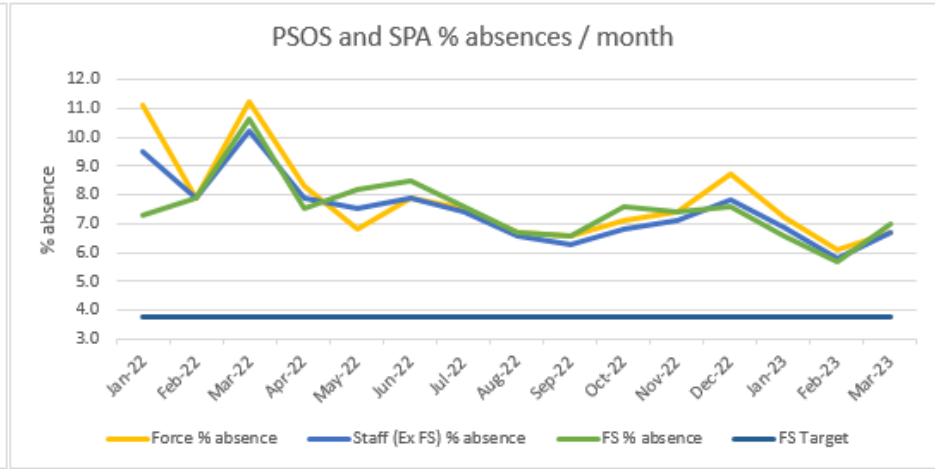
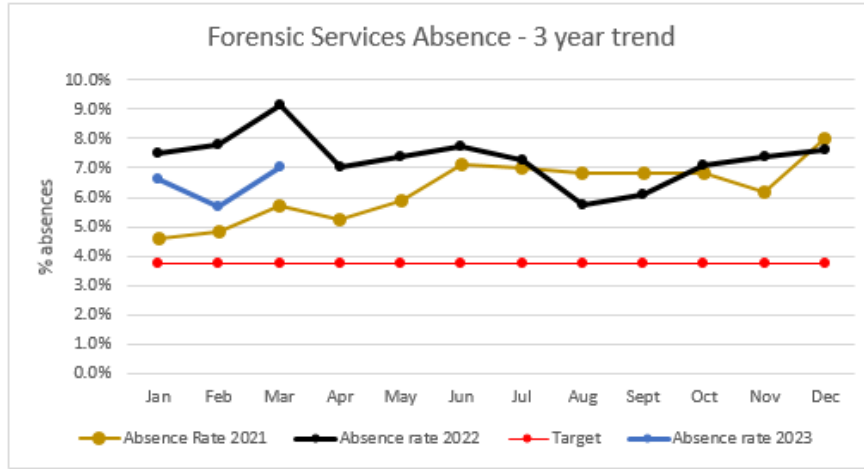
- Complaints and both positive and negative feedback are recorded in compliance with the ISO 17025/ISO 17020 Standards.
- During this reporting period, none were reportable to the SPA Complaints & Conduct Committee, with all relating to service delivery to COPFS or PSoS.



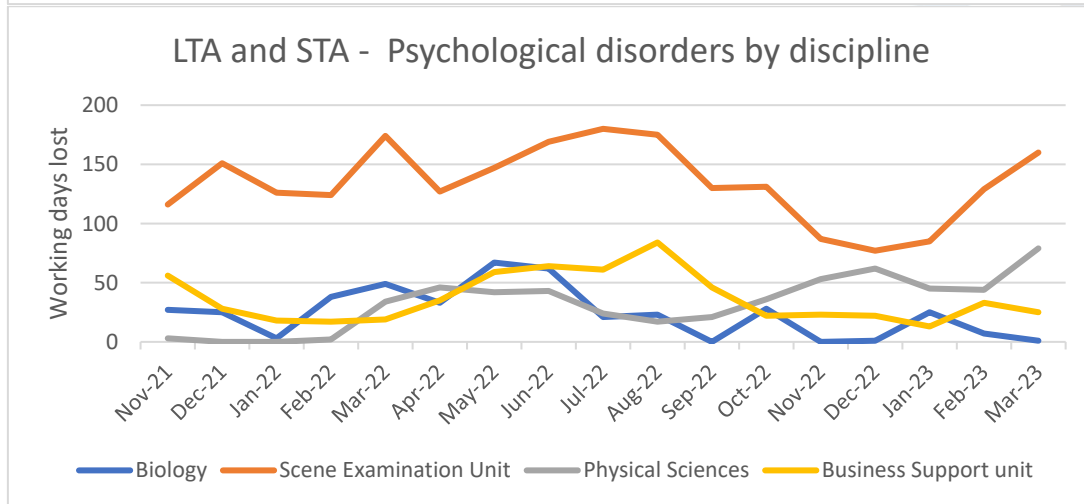
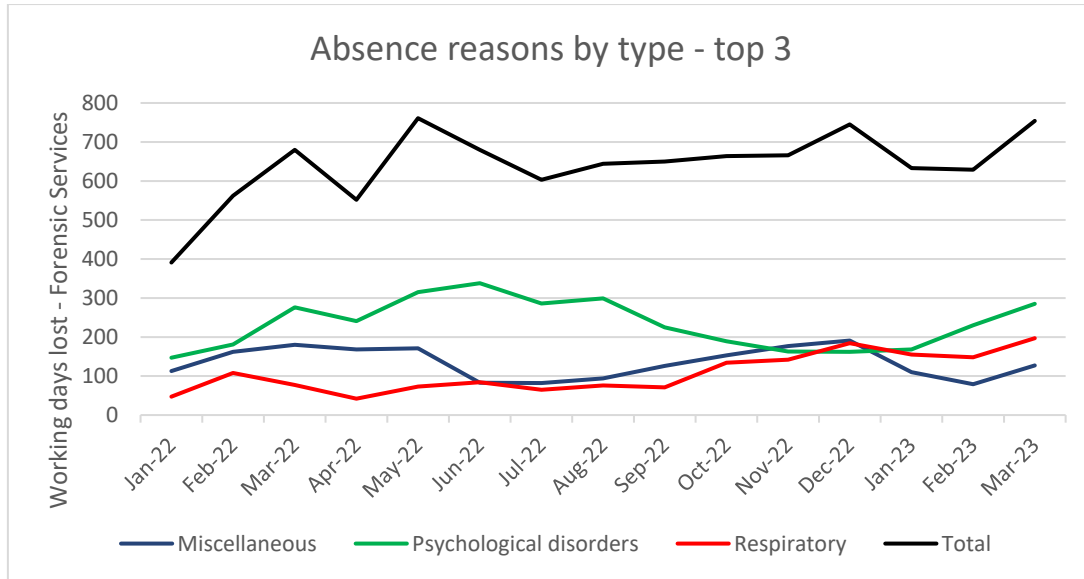
- Several Positive feedbacks relate to Forensic Services support for around six different Police Scotland Operations and the contribution of staff and test and investigation results.
- All complaints or negative feedback recorded in the Management System have corrective and preventive action documented following Standard Operating Procedure.
- Effectiveness of actions taken are reviewed through the internal audit process and in turn through Management System Review meetings.

### 3.10 Forensic Services – Absence data

Forensic services absence rate is on par with the organisation as a whole. Absences due to winter viruses should begin to abate as we move into spring.



Psychological issues remain the highest loss of working hours within Forensic Services. See Executive summary 2.10.



**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no financial implications in this report.

**5. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no personnel implications in this report.

**6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no legal implications in this report.

**7. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no reputational implications in this report.

**8. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are no social implications in this report.

**9. COMMUNITY IMPACT**

9.1 There are no community implications in this report.

**10. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are no equality implications in this report.

**11. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 There are no environmental implications in this report.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are invited to discuss the information provided in this report