



**SCOTTISH POLICE
AUTHORITY**
ÙGH DARRAS POILIS NA H-ALBA

Agenda Item 8

Meeting	Authority Meeting
Date	22 May 2025
Location	Clayton Hotel, Glasgow
Title of Paper	Forensic Services Strategy
Presented By	Fiona Douglas, Director of Forensic Services
Recommendation to Members	For approval
Appendix Attached	Yes. <i>Forensic Strategy 2025-2030</i>

PURPOSE

Following recommendation by Forensic Services Committee on 8 May 2025, the Forensic Services Strategy 2025-2030 is being submitted for approval by the SPA Board.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 *Forensic Strategy 2025-2030* supersedes the Forensic Strategy September 2021, which was approved by the Authority Board on 29th September 2021 and is [published on the SPA website](#). *Forensic Strategy 2025-2030* reflects the vital contribution forensic science makes to the delivery of justice throughout Scotland.
- 1.2 Building on the methodology used to create the previous strategy, we carried out extensive engagement to inform the strategy. This involved a two-tiered approach.
- 1.3 First of all, a survey of senior internal members of Forensic Services and all our key partners and stakeholders. These included Police Scotland, COPFS, PIRC, HMICS, the Biometrics Commissioner's Office, members of SPA Corporate and members of the Forensic Services Committee, the chair of the SPA, professional bodies, trade unions and members of legal defence groups. We included more than twice as many internal members of staff than previously in this survey.
- 1.4 Secondly, we carried out five workshops, one for each of the Forensic Services laboratory offices, and invited all our people managers - with around 50 being available to take part - to represent the views of their teams.
- 1.5 This gave an opportunity to all managers across Forensic Services to take part in either the survey or a workshop - giving a voice to a far larger number of people across Forensic Services than previously. We appreciate all the survey responses and comments in the workshops and the refreshed strategy reflects these outputs.

2. FURTHER DETAIL ON REPORT TOPIC

- 2.1 There was consistent support for keeping the previous Values, Vision, and Purpose for the *Forensic Strategy 2025-2030*. There was also a consensus that the Strategic outcomes and objectives needed updating.
- 2.2 It is recognised that Forensic Services has undergone a period of considerable change. The refreshed strategy recognises this and reflects that it is now the time for a period of consolidation as we

roll out the final phase of our New Operating Model and embed the benefits from our new and more flexible ways of working.

2.3 The four new strategic outcomes and supporting objectives are:

1. Our people are empowered to provide excellent forensic services in a positive working environment

- Develop our culture to ensure that everyone can be at their best, valuing our differences
- Demonstrate inclusive leadership that promotes respect for all our people
- Provide training and development that supports collaboration, innovation, and continuous improvement

2. We are sustainable, adaptable, and resilient to future challenges

- Provide high-quality, flexible forensic services that meet the changing needs of communities and partners
- Embed environmental sustainability into all decision making
- Embrace technological innovation to advance forensic science

3. We deliver high-quality and ethical services through innovative forensic science

- Drive research, development, and innovation to improve forensic science and delivery of our services
- Ensure the highest standards of ethical behaviours and impartiality at all times
- Deliver best value and continuous improvement to partners and customers

4. We work collaboratively with partners to serve the needs of the public and Criminal Justice in Scotland

- Prioritise work effectively in collaboration with partners to maximise the value of forensic science
- Invest in our partnerships to improve criminal justice and public health outcomes
- Promote the value that Forensic Services deliver for the people of Scotland

3. LAUNCHING THE FORENSIC STRATEGY 2025-2030

- 3.1 Once the *Forensic Strategy 2025-2030* is approved by the Authority Board, the Director of Forensic Services will send a copy to all the external stakeholders and colleagues who were involved in supporting the creation of the Strategy and thank them for their involvement.
- 3.2 All the managers will be asked to engage with their teams on the part they play in delivering the outcomes of the strategy. These updated outcomes and objectives will be central in the development of everyone's personal objectives as part their MyCareer conversations.

4. REPORTING PROGRESS AGAINST THE STRATEGY

- 4.1 Forensic Services' progress against the *Forensic Strategy 2025-2030* will be reported quarterly in public at the SPA Forensics Services Committee.
- 4.2 We will report against our Two-Year Business Plan which has detailed Key Performance Indicators which are set out in our published Performance Framework.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no detailed financial implications of the *Forensic Strategy 2025-2030* although there will be finance implications in its delivery.

6. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are positive implications on personnel in the delivery *Forensic Strategy 2025-2030* which so: "Our people are empowered to

provide excellent forensic services in a positive working environment”.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no specific legal implications in this report.

8. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The successful delivery of the *Forensic Strategy 2025-2030* will enhance the reputation of the Forensic Services.

9. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no social implications associated with this paper.

10. COMMUNITY IMPACT

10.1 There will be community benefits from the successful delivery of the *Forensic Strategy 2025-2030*

11. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The *Forensic Strategy 2025-2030* seeks to “develop our culture to ensure that everyone can be at their best, valuing our differences” which help enhance the diversity of people working in Forensic Services.

12. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

12.1 The *Forensic Strategy 2025-2030* seeks to “embed environmental sustainability into all decision making” so it should have positive environmental implications.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to approve the updated *Forensic Strategy 2025-2030*.



Forensic Strategy

25-30

Scientific excellence for safer communities



**FORENSIC
SERVICES**
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Foreword



Forensic science makes a vital contribution to the delivery of justice throughout Scotland. I am proud of the excellent work our Forensic Services scientists and staff deliver for the people of Scotland. Our Forensic Strategy 2025-2030 sets out Forensic Services' aspirations as we work to improve the delivery of these services and to create a culture where all staff can be at their best.

The 2021 Forensic Strategy was launched during a time of uncertainty as society tentatively moved out of the pandemic. In spite of these challenges, Forensic Services have continued to make significant improvements. Our New Operating Model is delivered through three capabilities: Search and Recovery; Analysis; and Reporting, all working alongside National Services and Operational Support Services.

While the previous Forensic Strategy focused on delivering change - including a New Operating Model – it is now the time for a period of consolidation as we roll out the final phase of this New Operating Model and embed the benefits from our new and more flexible ways of working. Throughout that extensive period of change, including full consultation with all staff, our 600 highly trained and skilled staff have delivered consistently high levels of performance.

The Forensic Services Performance Framework has been refreshed and published after extensive consultations with the SPA Forensic Services Committee. This updated framework aligns with the Forensic Strategy 2025-2030 and will be supported a robust two-year business plan to ensure effective delivery of strategic objectives. Our performance against this framework will be reported publicly and quarterly to the SPA Forensic Services Committee. Forensic Services have also continued to expand the scope of our UKAS accreditation and maintained accreditation to ISO 17025 for 26 consecutive years.

In December 2022, Forensic Services took on responsibility to deliver Post Mortem Toxicology services, opening a new £5.9 million laboratory in Glasgow with the specialist team moving across from the University of Glasgow. This allows Forensic Services to enhance the drugs information we provide to partners and supports the work of the Scottish Government's Drugs Harm Taskforce as well as wider health outcomes.

The first Scottish Biometrics Commissioner Brian Plastow was appointed in 2021 and published the first Code of Practice in November 2022. All Forensic Services staff are required to abide by this code, which supports and promotes the adoption of lawful, effective and ethical practices in relation to the acquisition, retention, use and destruction of biometric data.

We rebranded with a new visual identity and bi-lingual logo, designed internally, which reflects how Forensic Services deliver world-leading forensic science from the crime scene to the court. We also introduced annual excellence awards as well as publishing annual review reports, which promote and celebrate the achievements and excellence of our staff.

I am grateful to all our partners and stakeholders who helped us develop this refreshed Forensic Strategy 2025-2030. Partnership working is at the heart of everything we do right across Forensic Services. In 2024, we agreed and published an updated Memorandum of Understanding, which outlines the arrangements for the provision of forensic services with Police Scotland and COPFS.

In April 2023, HMICS published an assurance review of toxicology provision, and this has helped Forensic Services design our Initial Business Case for the Long Term Sustainable Model for Criminal Toxicology.

This Initial Business Case was approved by the SPA Resources Committee to move to Final Business Case in December 2024. It lays out how Forensic Services - in close partnership with Police Scotland and COPFS - can keep our communities safe and protected by working to reduce the devastating impact of drug driving on the roads of Scotland. This work is just one example of how we will take the Forensic Strategy 2025-2030 forward to work collaboratively with partners to serve the changing needs of the public and Criminal Justice in Scotland.

Forensic Services will develop and implement a new Core Operating System to provide staff with the digital systems they need. There are also untapped opportunities from Artificial Intelligence, as Forensic Services consider embracing such technological innovations in an ethical and sustainable way. These are just a few examples of how the Forensic Strategy 2025-2030 will ensure we are sustainable, adaptable, and resilient to future challenges across our rapidly changing society. We need to be ready and resilient to meet these changes, whatever they bring - so they can enhance the opportunities for our staff to be able to achieve even more.

The Forensic Strategy 2025-2030 has involved engagement with many members of Forensic Services staff as it is their work that will deliver the outcomes from this strategy. We want a culture where all our people can be at their best, valuing our differences and an inclusive approach to leadership that promotes respect for all. We know the importance of our people and we want them to feel empowered and be able to work collaboratively with our partners so we can all serve the needs of the public, criminal justice, and health services across Scotland in the best way we can.



Fiona Douglas
Director of Forensic Services SPA

2024:

a year in numbers

613

Highly skilled and
trained staff

£44.7m

Revenue budget

19,720

Crimes investigated

15,485

Scene attendance requests
from Police Scotland triaged
by Scene Examination
Tasking Unit

3,720

Unexplained and drug-related
death samples analysed by
Post Mortem Toxicology



97,474

Items managed by productions and logistics colleagues



3,000,000

Approximate number of controlled drug tablets and capsules identified



3D

New 3D weapon technology being utilised by firearms specialists



49,035

DNA samples processed by our laboratories



2,200

Drivers with controlled drugs identified in their blood



Competency and Values Framework

The Competency and Values Framework aims to support all Forensic Services, now and into the future. It sets out nationally recognised behaviours and values, which will provide a consistent foundation for a range of local and national processes. This framework will ensure that there are clear expectations of everyone working in Forensic Services, which in turn will lead to standards being raised for the benefit and safety of the public.

The framework has six competencies:

- We are emotionally aware
- We take ownership
- We are collaborative
- We deliver, support and inspire
- We analyse critically
- We are innovative and open minded

The six competencies are clustered into three groups and under each competency are three levels that show what behaviours will look like in practice.

The three clusters, which describe ways of working that are made up of the competencies include:

- Resolute, compassionate and committed
- Inclusive, enabling and visionary leadership
- Intelligent, creative and informed policing

Each cluster has a heading and a description of why that area is important. Each competency includes a description and a list of behaviours which indicate that a person is displaying that particular competence.

All of the competencies are underpinned by our values of Integrity, Professionalism, and Impartiality, that should support everything we do in Forensic Services.



Forensic Strategy

Our Vision

Scientific excellence for safer communities

Our Purpose

To provide excellent, innovative forensic services to support justice in Scotland and keep our communities safe and protected

Our Values

Integrity, Professionalism, Impartiality

We value **Integrity** so that we are a trusted organisation

- Acting with honesty at all times. Raising concerns
- Ethically responsible decision-making

We value **Professionalism** so we can deliver a quality scientific service

- Committed deployment of our skills, knowledge, new technology and experience
- Treating each other fairly and with respect

We value **Impartiality** so we can uphold the values of the criminal justice system

- Practising in an unbiased way without prejudice
- Providing independent expert evidence and testimony

Strategic Outcomes

1. Our people are supported through a positive working environment, enabling them to provide excellent forensic services

- We are sustainable, adaptable and prepared for future challenges
- We deliver high-quality, ethical services; and lead in order to advance forensic science
- We work collaboratively with partners to serve the needs of the public and Criminal Justice in Scotland

2. We are sustainable, adaptable, and resilient to future challenges

- Provide high-quality, flexible forensic services that meet the changing needs of communities and partners
- Embed environmental sustainability into all decision making
- Embrace technological innovation to advance forensic science

3. We deliver high-quality and ethical services through innovative forensic science

- Drive research, development, and innovation to improve forensic science and delivery of our services
- Ensure the highest standards of ethical behaviours and impartiality at all times
- Deliver best value and continuous improvement to partners and customers

4. We work collaboratively with partners to serve the needs of the public and Criminal Justice in Scotland

- Prioritise work effectively in collaboration with partners to maximise the value of forensic science
- Invest in our partnerships to improve criminal justice and public health outcomes
- Promote the value that Forensic Services deliver for the people of Scotland

Outcome One

Our people are empowered to provide excellent forensic services in a positive working environment

- **Develop our culture to ensure that everyone can be at their best, valuing our differences**
- **Demonstrate inclusive leadership that promotes respect for all our people**
- **Provide training and development that supports collaboration, innovation, and continuous improvement**

In Forensic Services we recognise the importance of our people and investing in them. We want our people to feel empowered and work in a culture that values all our differences; a culture where everyone has the opportunity to thrive and be their best.

To deliver this requires an inclusive approach to leadership that will embed such a culture, one that promotes respect for all, welcomes new ideas and fresh thinking, and builds on the many successes of Forensic Services over recent years.

All these successes have been delivered by our people, who have achieved performance improvements and outcomes right across Forensic Services over the past years.

In carrying out their duties, some Forensic Services staff are exposed to traumatic incidents which can impact on their emotional and mental health, and this can affect people differently. We will continue to build on our work to support our people and meet their differing needs including their mental and physical health.

The vast majority of the Forensic Services budget is rightly invested in our staff, and we need to continue to support our people with training and development which helps them improve collaboration, innovation and embed continuous improvement.

A positive working environment allows staff to embrace technological innovation and advance forensic science as well as advancing their own skills and knowledge.

This is driven through continuous professional development, which enhances the opportunities for staff to maintain scientific excellence and ensure alignment with our Competency and Values Framework - supporting Forensic Services now and in the future.

Forensic Services recognise that having a healthy life-work balance is also essential to creating this positive working environment and helping our staff be the best they can be. One of the ways we support our staff is to use flexible working patterns that allow time to be balanced between different lifestyles and important services we deliver around the clock.

Outcome Two

We are sustainable, adaptable, and resilient to future challenges

- Provide high-quality, flexible forensic services that meet the changing needs of communities and partners
- Embed environmental sustainability into all decision making
- Embrace technological innovation to advance forensic science

The roll out of the New Operating Model for Forensic Services has allowed us to increase the flexibility and sustainability of the services we offer and to adapt to the ever-changing needs of our communities and partners, while ensuring high-quality delivery and best value. As we reach the end of the delivery of the new model, it is now time to consolidate these changes and review and reflect on how to move forward to determine the benefits across Forensic Services.

Given the changing political, economic, and technological environment, the flexibility of our New Operating System now means our people are better prepared than ever to meet the needs of our partners and customers, as they look to adapt and respond to this changing environment.

Previously, Forensic Services had committed to an increased focus on environmental sustainability, and this included introducing electric vehicles and ensuring our new

laboratory in Glasgow adopted the latest sustainable practices. We work in close partnership with Police Scotland colleagues, who provide support services to Forensic Services, and we are now developing a joint Sustainability Strategy, aligned to the Scottish's Government Net Zero and Climate Adaptation goals. This will make a significant improvement and assist Forensic Services to embed environmental sustainability into all our decision making.

Artificial Intelligence now offers a multitude of opportunities for Forensic Services to be creative with the delivery of our services as we seek to embrace ethical technological innovation which will allow us to advance forensic science. Developing and improving digital systems is essential, as is securing the funding for a new Core Operating System, which will be adaptable and resilient to future changes.

Outcome Three

We deliver high-quality and ethical services through innovative forensic science

- Drive research, development, and innovation to improve forensic science and delivery of our services
- Ensure the highest standards of ethical behaviours and impartiality at all times
- Deliver best value and continuous improvement to partners and customers

Forensic Services will continue to look at how we can embrace new technologies and ways of working so we can deliver the best possible outcomes for the people of Scotland.

All our staff are committed to working with integrity, professionalism and impartiality – the values that shape our behaviours and decisions. We are also committed to adhering to the Scottish Biometrics Commissioner's Code of Practice.

The majority of the work of Forensic Services is accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) to ISO17025, the rigorous standard for testing laboratories, for 26 years – which provides third-party quality assurance of our technical and managerial standards.

As part of the New Operating Model, Forensic Services formed a Research, Development, and Innovation Team to bring together specialist scientific knowledge and work to influence innovation internally and throughout the wider forensic community.

The team will drive the development of new techniques and methods which allow our people to continue to deliver scientific excellence in their fields of expertise and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our services.

Outcome Four

We work collaboratively with partners to serve the needs of the public and Criminal Justice in Scotland

- **Prioritise work effectively in collaboration with partners to maximise the value of forensic science**
- **Invest in our partnerships to improve criminal justice and public health outcomes**
- **Promote the value that Forensic Services deliver for the people of Scotland**

Most of the work in Forensic Services is done in collaboration with justice or health partners.

We work closely with Police Scotland, COPFS, and PIRC and our joint improvement groups ensure that we maximise the value of the forensic science we deliver. The jointly agreed Memorandum of Understanding outlines the arrangements for the provision of forensic services and achievement is measured and reported against Key Performance Indicators.

We will continue to work closely with partners to deliver the Long Term Sustainable Model for Criminal Toxicology which will allow Police Scotland to expand their road safety work. This will deliver a step change improvement to our Criminal Toxicology work, helping to keep our communities safe and protected by working to reduce the devastating impact of drug driving on Scotland's roads.

We will seek to improve continuously, and we welcome scrutiny from oversight bodies. HMICS will be carrying out a joint audit with Audit Scotland across all policing areas to ensure we are operating efficiently and effectively and delivering Best Value to the public.

Using social and digital media, Forensic Services now reach a wider and more diverse audience than previously. We will continue to expand our use of such media to promote a better understanding of the work Forensic Services do on behalf of the people of Scotland. Our new branding reflects how Forensic Services now deliver our world-leading forensic science from the crime scene to the court for our partners and the public.



Delivery

Forensic Services report against a two-year plan with detailed Key Performance Indicators set out in our published Performance Framework. Internally, a series of plans will enable the delivery of Forensic Strategy 2025-2030, these include:

- Forensic Services Two-Year Business Plan
- Internal performance reporting
- The People Plan
- The Digital & Data Plan
- The Strategic Workforce Plan
- Research, Development & Innovation Strategy
- Joint reports with partners such as the Joint Biometrics Strategy with Police Scotland

These enablers are reported in through Forensic Services internal meetings with the high-level outcomes reported publicly through the SPA Forensic Services Committee.

Governance

The Director and Senior Management Team will report publicly every quarter to the SPA Forensic Services Committee on performance of Forensic Services against the Forensic Strategy 2025-2030. The Director also attends full meetings of the SPA and reports directly to the SPA Chair. The Director of Forensic Services reports directly to the chair of the SPA.

Forensic Services also regularly report publicly to other SPA meetings including People Committee, Resources Committee, Audit & Risk Committee, & Policing Performance Committee, as and when required.

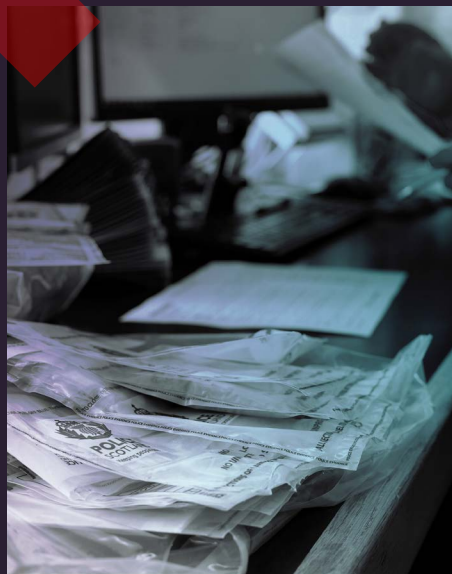
Alignment



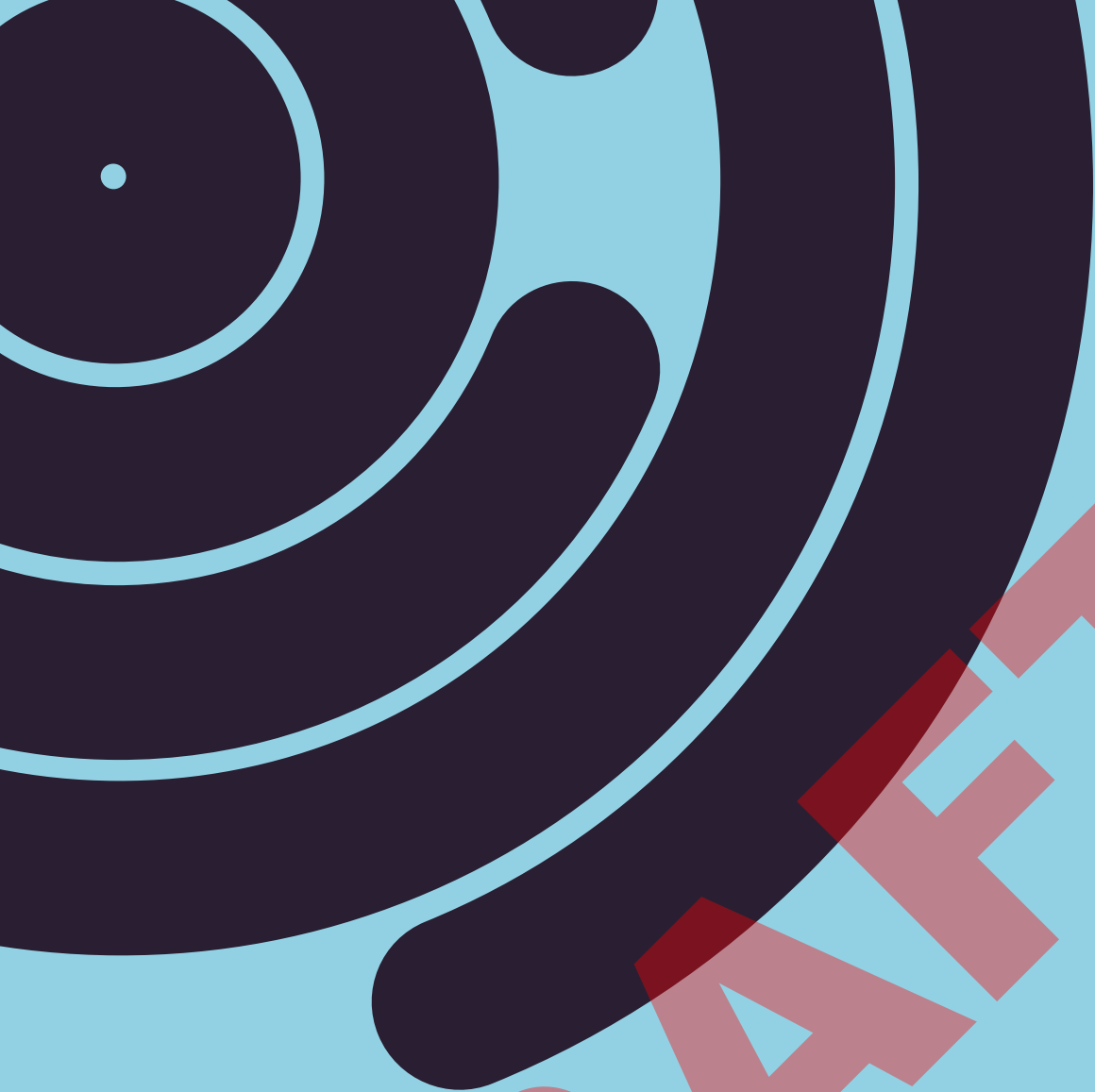
The Forensic Strategy 2025-2030 is aligned with strategies of our key partners, these include:

- **SPA Corporate Strategy**
- **Police Scotland's 2030 vision and three-year policing plan**
- **Joint Strategy for Policing 2023-26: Policing for a safe, protected and resilient Scotland**
- **COPFS Strategic Plan 2023-27**
- **PIRC Strategic Plan 2023-2025**
- **Scottish Government's National Performance Framework**

The Forensic Strategy links to and contributes to the delivery of the Scottish Government Strategic Police Priorities of: Crime and Security; Confidence; Sustainability; Partnerships; People and Evidence.







DRAFT



spa.police.uk/what-we-do/forensic-services/what-we-do/

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