



Agenda Item 3.1

Meeting	Forensic Services Committee
Date	6 August 2024
Location	Video Conference
Title of Paper	Forensic Services Director's report
Presented By	Fiona Douglas, Director of Forensic Services
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached	Yes – Working for Forensic Services

PURPOSE

To update members on the recent key activities across Forensic Services.

1. Updates

Budget on target

- 1.1. The forecast at the end of the first quarter shows Forensic Services currently in line with £44m revenue budget settlement for the current financial year. Remaining on budget will be dependent on Forensic Services delivering efficiency plans throughout the year which we are committed to meeting.
- 1.2. Year to date Forensic Services has spent 10% of the £1 million capital budget with the remaining allocated to spend over the remainder of the financial year. The senior management team have a sharp focus on the capital spend to ensure that the investment is achieved prior to the end of the financial year.

Sustainable recruitment

- 1.3. Although staff numbers are currently below the level envisaged originally in the New Operating Model, due to budget pressures, we are managing vacancies carefully to ensure we recruit to meet the demand pressures across Forensic Services rather than on a straightforward vacancy replacement basis.
- 1.4. We are also seeking to recruit sustainably – so Forensic Services consider the impact all recruitment decisions will have on future budget years - not just the current financial settlement for 2024-25.

Fall in recorded absence

- 1.5. Performance across Forensic Services remains good, particularly at a time where we started rolling out the New Operating Model across most areas of the organisation. There was also a significant improvement in recorded absences over the past year.
- 1.6. There was also a notable improvement in the Search and Recovery Scenes incident response times which is partly because of improving capacity and the embedding of the new processes in the Scenes Tasking Unit.

Increase in Drug Driving capacity

- 1.7. Drug Driving internal capacity increased through 2023-24 and further improvements are expected to be delivered during Q2/3 of 2024-25. While these new methods are being implemented, outsourcing is being used to release the staff to deliver this work.
- 1.8. Demand has been higher than the expected 250 cases per month. Any cases over the monthly expected levels are immediately outsourced, so there is no risk of a backlog building up. Drug Driving demand and output remain in balance, through this combination of internal reporting and outsourcing, so there is currently little risk of cases exceeding the statutory time limit.

Prioritising inclusion

- 1.9. Forensic Services, alongside SPA Corporate, are working with a specialist company - INvolve - as part of our priority to understand how to create a culture in Forensic Services where everyone can be at their best, valuing our differences and ensuring that how we work includes everyone. The Director wrote to all staff at the start of 2024 to make clear that this is a key priority for Forensic Services.
- 1.10. As the part of the initial work, INvolve have carried out a survey and are hosting focus groups which, after evaluation, will provide us with the practical steps to take around inclusion, highlight areas of success and improvement, an overview of the Forensic Services demographic profile, and key feedback from the organisation to the senior team which we will then act on.

Recruitment event

- 1.11. An estimated 2,500 members of the public attended a joint Recruitment Showcase with Police Scotland and Forensic Services at the Recruitment and Training Centre at Jackton on 1 June 2024. We published a booklet – *Working for Forensic Services* – which is attached as an appendix and is also published on the SPA website, to promote the work we do to applicants.
- 1.12. Forensic Services colleagues, members of staff associations as well as Police Scotland officers and staff all took part in the event which was well-received by the people attending.

Senior Management Team portfolios

- 1.13. With the changes in the Forensic Services Management Team over the past year, portfolios have been agreed with the Heads of Function. Helen Haworth is Head of Acquisitive Crime, Alastair Patience, Head of Serious Crime, Paul Stewart is Head of National Services, and Sam Curran is Operational Implementation.

The Heads of Function work closely with Joanne Tierney, Head of Change & Development, who all report directly into Vicki Morton, Forensic Services Chief Operating Officer.

Lifelines training

- 1.14. Members of the Senior Management Team have completed the Lifelines Scotland Training – which is an NHS-led national project which supports the wellbeing of staff working across all emergency services. This training is available to all staff across Forensic Services.
- 1.15. Led by Forensic Services-trained staff, who volunteer to take on this work on top of their regular duties, Lifelines Scotland is based on international research into traumatic stress as well as years of clinical experience. Further details are available on the [Lifelines Scotland website](#).

Virtual Reality fire training

- 1.16. A second test burn – named Kelpie - which allows realistic fire investigation training to be carried out on scenes using Virtual Reality took place at the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Training site, Portlethen, on 5 June. Representatives from Forensic Services, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Leverhulme Research Centre for Forensic Science, Police Scotland, Danish Police and independent fire investigation body Hawkins, witnessed the burn which was reported by [BBC Scotland news](#) and across social media.
- 1.17. The Virtual Reality technology used in the burn was developed, trialled, and delivered by colleagues from Police Scotland Digital Division and was formally handed over to Forensic Services on 21 June. This ground-breaking technology has been developed through a joint collaboration with partners and is designed specifically to improve knowledge and understanding around fire investigations while increasing training opportunities for staff.

Psychological Supervision project

- 1.18. A total of 90 Search and Recovery Scene Examiners have had three of the four meetings with an independent counsellor planned during the first year of the Psychological Supervision Project being co-ordinated by Forensic Services Leadership Development Programme Lead. Anecdotal feedback has been encouraging, with examiners reporting that it has been the first time they have felt engaged with something that is for them and their specific needs.
- 1.19. At the end of year one, there will be focus groups to gather feedback and complete an interim report to consider results so far and opportunities to adapt and deliver a more bespoke service and identify the value of the programme.

Post-Mortem Toxicology service

- 1.20. We have ongoing discussions with members of staff, who transferred from the University of Glasgow to Forensic Services under TUPE, and their trade union representatives about the possible integration with SPA terms and conditions and structures.
- 1.21. This is likely to be a lengthy process, as it requires considerable negotiation and agreement before any change can go ahead. These staff provide the Post-Mortem Toxicology Service and have delivered an excellent service both during and since the transfer.

Nitazenes briefing

- 1.22. Forensic Services have provided the committee chair with a briefing on Nitazenes and their impact on Forensic Services. Nitazenes is a term used to describe a group of drugs first reported to the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction in 2019. They are synthetic opioids (benzimidazoles) and in general are of concern due to their potency.
- 1.23. Nitazenes have been detected across Scotland in a variety of drug preparations and in fatalities. Their prevalence is currently low, and their significance in fatalities is unclear and there has been no significant impact on demand for Forensic Services to date. Forensic Services support the work Public Health Scotland through the Rapid Action Drug Alerts and Response (RADAR) who published an [alert about Nitazene-type drugs in January 2023](#).

Biometrics conference

- 1.24. Forensic Services played a key role in supporting Scotland's first Biometrics Conference in Edinburgh in June. The Director, who spoke at the conference and took part in discussion groups, said: "Biometrics is at the core of Forensic Science in Scotland. It's a critical technique and has revolutionised how Forensic Services have been delivered."
- 1.25. Cabinet Secretary Angela Constance praised the work of Forensic Services staff in her opening speech at the conference run by the Scottish Biometrics Commissioner in partnership with colleagues from SPA Corporate and Police Scotland. The conference explored the use of Biometrics in Scotland with practitioners, academics, and criminal justice experts to promote evidence-based discussion and to increase the awareness of the Scottish Biometrics landscape.

Ensuring best value

- 1.26. As part of our commitment to continuous improvement and ensuring best value in public service, Forensic Services has started a comprehensive self-assessment of best value right across the organisation. This work will be reported into Members of the Authority through the SPA Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee.
- 1.27. We have held an initial workshop with Forensic Services Senior Management Team and SPA Corporate colleagues and we will be engaging with all Forensic Services staff to take this work forward through the seven best value themes:
- Vision & Leadership
 - Governance & Accountability
 - Use of Resources
 - Partnerships & Collaborative Working
 - Community Responsiveness
 - Fairness & Equality
 - Performance Management & Improvement

Health & Safety review

- 1.28. Working closely with Police Scotland's Health & Safety team, Forensic Services are carrying out a review of the Health & Safety Committees structures across all our working areas.
- 1.29. After concerns raised by colleagues in Rushton Court Laboratory, Dundee, we want to be sure we have the suitable structures and processes in place to deal with any issues at the appropriate level so we ensure all staff can be confident they are in a safe and healthy environment no matter where they are working.

Demonstrating the value of Forensic Services

- 1.30. The Leverhulme Research Centre for Forensic Science in Dundee is providing significant support for the project and working group looking at how to demonstrate the value Forensic Services brings to the justice sector and the people of Scotland. A researcher, dedicated to the work and funded by the Leverhulme Research Centre, has been appointed and will be taking this work forward.

Celebrating staff excellence

- 1.31. After the success of last year's inaugural Forensic Services Excellence Awards, the second ceremony to celebrate the excellence and innovation in forensic science throughout Scotland will be held next month in Stirling.
- 1.32. The awards support the vision of Forensic Services - *Scientific excellence for safer communities* – and recognise and reward members of staff whose contribution to Forensic Services has been outstanding. The categories of the awards are:
 - Greatest Contribution to Forensic Science Award
 - Service Improvement Award
 - Team of the Year Award
 - Science and Innovation Award
 - Staff Member of the Year Award
 - Wellbeing Award
 - Director's Award

2. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

2.1 There are no financial implications in this report.

3. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no personnel implications in this report.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no legal implications in this report.

5. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no reputational implications in this report.

6. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no social implications in this report.

7. COMMUNITY IMPACT

7.1 There are no community implications in this report.

8. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no equality implications in this report.

9. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no environmental implications in this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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



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Working for Forensic Services

INTRODUCTION

Forensic Services delivers world-leading, high-quality, value for money services to meet the expectations of the Scottish public and the needs of our partners in criminal justice.

Our 600 highly-trained and skilled scientists and staff operate from five main laboratory sites in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow and at the Scottish Crime Campus in Gartcosh with Scene Examination teams based throughout Scotland. Forensic Services employ around 500 scientists who are supported by about 100 business staff who ensure the smooth running of the organisation.

Forensic Services provide the whole service from the crime scene, through search, recovery, and analysis, to the court, reporting evidence in Scotland. This 'integrated provision' ensures impartiality and integrity – key values in the criminal justice system. There is a 'sterile corridor' between Forensic Services and Police Scotland. The Forensic Services crime-scene-to-court model is unique and robust.

The Director of Forensic Services reports to the Chair of the Scottish Police Authority. Oversight is given by the Authority's Forensic Services Committee. This was established in October 2018. It scrutinises the work done by Forensic Services and it is open to the public to observe.

The Scottish Police Authority approved the Forensic Strategy 2021-26 in September 2021. This followed extensive consultation with staff and stakeholders. The strategy provides a clear vision for continuing to provide excellent forensic services at the cutting edge. It is a vision for:

- being sustainable
- providing value for money as a public service
- maintaining and enhancing public trust and confidence
- building on our successful operating model.

Four strategic outcomes

Our strategy is framed around four strategic outcomes showing the impact we aim to have, and the forensic service we want to be in the future:

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

Our new Operating Model, introduced in 2024, will also transform our service to Local Policing, especially in relation to volume crime.

Quality

Forensic Services aim to provide the highest standard of quality and consistency in all aspects of the work it carries out. We do this by performing inspection activities and testing in accordance with fully validated methods and customers' requirements, whilst maintaining economic viability of the test facility.

The majority of the work of Forensic Services has been accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) to ISO17025, the rigorous standard for testing laboratories, for more than 25 years – this provides third-party quality assurance on the technical and managerial standards in place.

The United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) also provides accreditation services for UK crime scene investigation service providers to ISO17020. Forensic Services operates in compliance with the requirements of ISO17020 and is working towards accreditation.

Forensic Services is committed to:

- Delivering an impartial forensic service in keeping with good professional practice
- Continually developing the range, quality and cost-effectiveness of these services to meet customer requirements.

Forensic Services were the first large-scale forensic provider in the UK to be awarded accreditation from UKAS for our fingerprint comparisons in 2016.

The staff employed by Forensic Services are responsible for familiarising themselves with all relevant aspects of the Management System, including the Quality Policy Manual and the relevant procedures, and implementing them in all of the work they carry out.

Details of Forensic Services accredited services can be found on the UKAS Website.



Why work for us?

Inclusive Organisation

Forensic Services are committed to equality, diversity and inclusion.

We are working hard to increase diversity and inclusion, where communities are under-represented, including those from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities, people of all ages, abilities, faiths, religions and gender, LGBTI communities and those from other disadvantaged or marginalised backgrounds, who share our values and wish to make a difference to the communities we serve.

All applications will be treated on merit, based on the evidence provided in your application and suitability for the role you have applied for.

We are committed to promoting a diverse workforce and achieving and promoting an organisational culture where staff can deliver excellence in forensic science for a safe, protected and resilient Scotland.

As part of that commitment we are an advocate for gender equality having pledged support for HeForShe.

HeForShe is a global solidarity movement for gender equality initiated by the United Nations with the aim of encouraging men and boys to speak out for gender equality recognising that gender equality is not just a women's issue but a basic human right that benefits everyone.

The Benefits

We offer a competitive benefits package that includes:

- Competitive salaries
- Annual salary increments
- Local Government Pension Scheme
- 28 days annual leave and 6 public holidays on appointment
- Wide range of family friendly policies
- Modern, spacious working environments
- Employee Assistance Programme
- Access to a range of staff associations.

Entry Requirements

The minimum requirements for Forensic Scientists and Forensic Examiner roles is an Honours Degree in a scientific discipline. Many candidates also hold a post graduate degree in a forensic science or science discipline. Entry level for a Scene Examiner role is HND, but preferably a degree in a scientific discipline.

Business Support roles have a minimum entry requirement of Higher Grades, dependent on the role being advertised.

Quality Lead roles within the Quality team require a degree in a scientific discipline, or equivalent professional qualification or experience.

Our Values

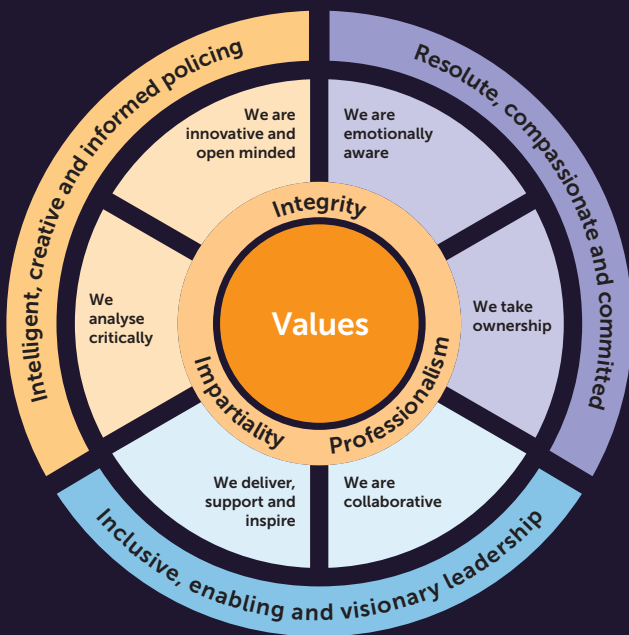
Integrity, Professionalism, Impartiality

Our Purpose

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

Our Vision

Scientific excellence for safer communities



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 that are clustered into three groups. Under each competency are three levels that show what behaviours will look like in practice. All of the competencies are underpinned by our values that should support everything we do in Forensic Services. 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.



New Operating Model

Forensic Services started implementing our New Operating Model in 2024. Forensic Services are widely recognised as a scientific leader who employ the latest technologies and have obtained quality accreditation by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) for more than 25 years.

To make the best use of this vast experience and expertise, an efficient operating model is required to release the potential of our 600 highly-trained and skilled staff.

From the crime scene to the court, the New Operating Model is designed to deliver an effective, efficient and robust service to our customers and partners. We hope that, with continuing development and innovation, the service provided will continue to be world-leading – and to be a service of which Scotland can be justifiably proud.

Capabilities

The New Operating Model will deliver services through three main capabilities rather than the previous departmental structure – allowing a more flexible and swifter approach to dealing with changes across the policing and justice sector.

The previous job descriptions meant that it could be difficult and slow to move staff when demand changed. The New Operating Model allows more flexibility with a swifter response reflecting these ever-changing crime demands – backed by a flexible business support across Forensic Services.

The capabilities are: Search & Recovery; Analysis; and Reporting.

Benefits

- More cost effective, using our skills and resources efficiently
- Resilience improvements to help meet changing demands and justice priorities
- Improved Research and Development in Forensic Science
- Greater emphasis on people management
- Staff expand skills through multi-skilling, improved training and development
- Maximising the benefits of local delivery of serious crime
- Faster delivery of intelligence.



Key Facts

Forensic Services deliver world-leading forensic science for a safe, protected and resilient Scotland.

Our people are our most important asset and demonstrate their professionalism and commitment to the provision of excellent forensic services on a daily basis.

Our budget for 2024/25 is more than £44million. This represents around 3% of the total SPA/Police Scotland budget.

Forensic Services are responsible for the DNA database. Details of the samples are regularly published on the Forensic Services website.

You can view our latest vacancies by visiting the Scottish Police Authority Recruitment section.

All Forensic Services staff abide by the Scottish Biometrics Commissioner code of practice.

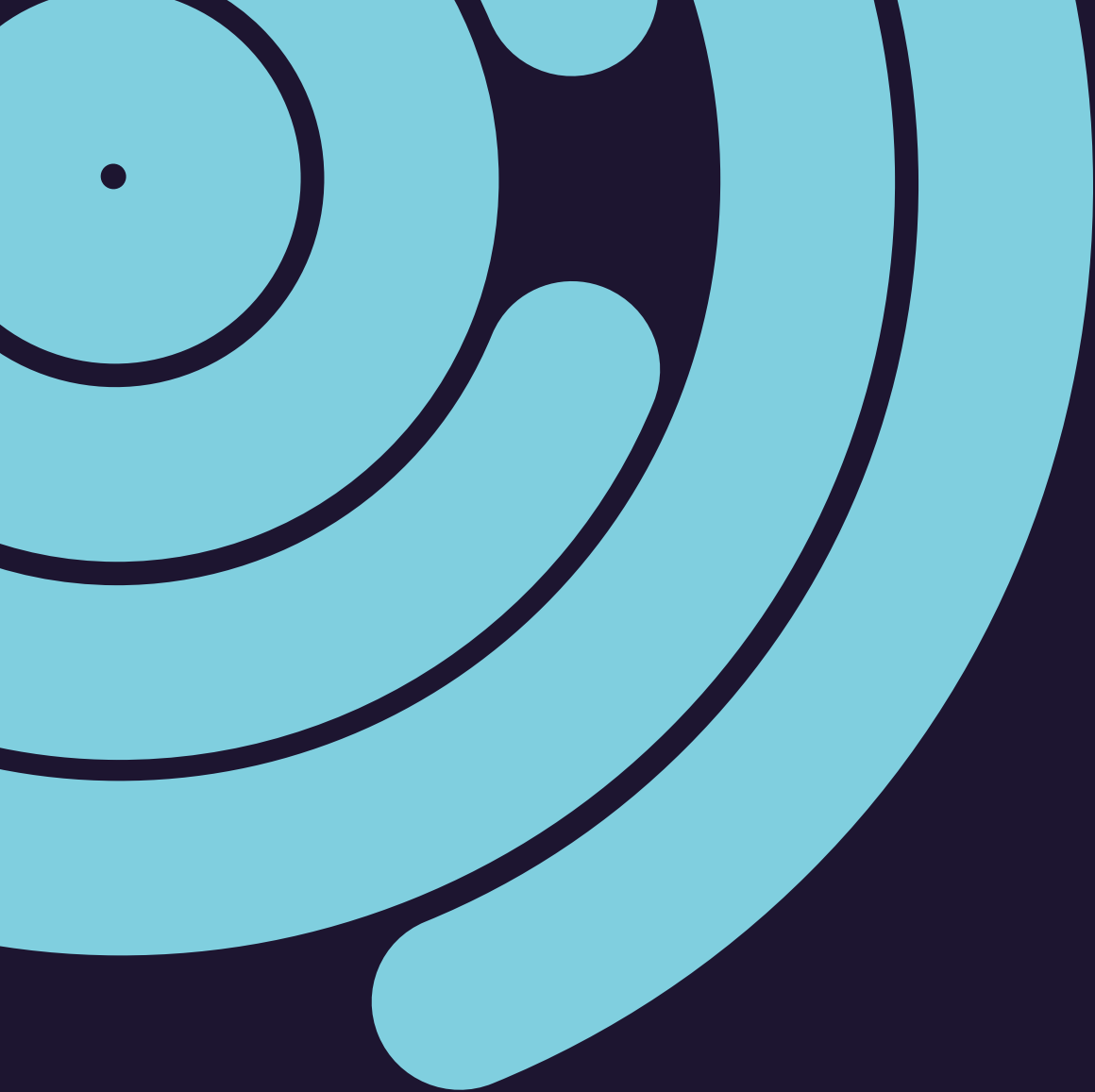
We have five main laboratories in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, and the Scottish Crime Campus, Gartcosh. We also have 13 scene examiners sites around the country.

A Research Development and Innovation team was created to drive development of new techniques and methods.

UKAS Quality Accreditation achieved for more than 25 years, providing the highest standard of quality and consistency in all aspects of the work we carry out.

Stay up to date with our latest vacancies by signing up for job alerts on our application portal.

Due to the sensitive nature of our work, Forensic Services are unable to accommodate any visits or work experience including educational requests.



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