



Agenda Item 6

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Forensic Services Committee</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>14 December 2022</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>MS Teams</b>
<b>Title of Paper</b>	<b>Forensic Toxicology Oversight Group – Update from Meeting Held 1<sup>st</sup> November and 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022</b>
<b>Presented By</b>	<b>Paul Edie</b>
<b>Recommendation to Members</b>	<b>For Discussion</b>
<b>Appendix Attached</b>	<b>No</b>

**PURPOSE**

To provide the Committee with an update on discussions at the first meeting of the Forensic Toxicology Oversight Group 1 November and 5 December 2022.

## Summary report from Forensic Services Toxicology Oversight Group

01 November 2022

Paul Edie, Committee Chair

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### Main items of business

- Toxicology Matters – Data Insights and Development Plan
- Project Weaver, Progress on Implementation
- Drug Spiking Casework Update
- Risk Management

### Key issues raised

#### Toxicology Matters – Data Insights and Development Plan –

Members were provided with an overview report which provided updates in relation to performance, outsourcing, long term sustainability, and Operation HITCH Silver Improvement Group.

- **Performance** – Members were provided with updates related to the ageing of cases and current caseload. Members were advised that as of the 1<sup>st</sup> November there were 39 delayed cases in the current caseload with one of those cases due to process failure. Members were assured this would be delivered by Friday 4<sup>th</sup> November 2022. Members were updated on the projected age of cases being reported over the coming months and assured that the time to analyse drug driving cases will be reduced to 3 months by the end of December 2022.
- **Outsourcing** – Members were advised that there are two contracts in place, one ending in January 2023 and the new contract which began in September 2022. The intention is that 400 new Section 5a and Section 4 cases will be outsourced to those key providers in November and December 2022. This will provide significant benefit internally, and will support planned development activity.
- **Long-term Sustainable Model** – Members were advised that work was ongoing to review and update the position paper following discussions with colleagues at Scottish Government.
- **Operation HITCH Silver Improvement Group** - Members were updated on cases which could not be progressed to prosecution due to delays in the laboratory, noting the following;
  - August 2022 – 3 cases
  - September 2022 – 0 cases
  - October 2022 – COPFS were due to provide an update.

**Toxicology Drug Driving Update** – Members were assured that following dialogue with Roads Policing, it was not anticipated that future drunk and drug driving campaigns would increase demand due to the profiles between drink and drug driving being different. Members were assured that work was ongoing with COPFS in order to resolve risks around accreditation. It was also reported that outsourcing will continue to be a requirement for the next financial year to avoid any recurrence of backlog.

**Project Weaver, Progress on Implementation** – Members were provided with a final detailed update in relation to the project prior to transition on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022. Members will receive a further update to the next oversight group on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

**Drug Spiking Casework Update** – Members were provided with a detailed update on spiking cases received for forensic analysis including volumes, types of drugs being identified along with the time and process involved. Members were assured that there were no areas for concern other than the source of funding for any additional outsourcing. Members discussed the role Forensic Services play in addressing behaviours around spiking and were assured that this matter is part of the Scottish Government Round Table discussions. The opportunity for Forensic Services to pull together drugs intelligence, in order to provide more support from a public health perspective was also noted.

**Risk Management** – Members were provided with an overview of risks and welcomed the approach taken in the reporting. Members had a detailed discussion around the need for additional funding and were assured that when the budget situation is clearer further discussions will take place around how Police Scotland will police the roads and prioritise activity, and how that impacts on the projected demand for drug driving toxicology analysis.

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## Summary report from Forensic Services Toxicology Oversight Group

05 December 2022

Paul Edie, Committee Chair

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### Main items of business

- Toxicology Matters – Data Insights and Development Plan
- Project Weaver, Progress on Implementation
- Drug Spiking Casework Update
- Risk Management

### Key issues raised

#### Toxicology Matters – Data Insights and Development Plan –

Members were provided with an overview report which included updates in relation to the following:

- Performance
- Outsourcing
- Long-Term Sustainable Model
- HMICS Assurance Review
- Accreditation
- Operation HITCH Silver Improvement Group

Members had a detailed discussion around what lessons had been learned from all the work to date and were advised that although it had been a challenging and learning experience, that learning could be applied in the following areas;

- How the situation was highlighted
- Partnership working with Crown Office and Police Scotland
- Internal processes

Members were assured to hear that an exercise would be carried out with the senior leadership team and management team to share that learning out with all parts of Forensic Services. In addition there have been constructive discussions with colleagues in Police Scotland and COPFS in order to have a better shared understanding of what the risks are in relation to forensic science across the whole system.

Members noted concerns around the induction timeline and process for new recruits, temporary contracts and noted the need for a long term and sustainable solution, however, were advised that until there was a long term sustainable model the use of temporary staff was the only option.

**Project Weaver, Progress on Implementation** – Members were provided with an update following the go live date of 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022 on this project. Members were assured by the following;

- There has been a successful transition of 23 staff members from Post Mortem Toxicology services from Glasgow University to SPA Forensic Services following successful collaboration with a number of organisations.
- No backlog has been inherited.
- There has been really good engagement with trade unions and vetting is now all complete with a good induction programme in place for staff.
- A development plan is currently being formulated around what is next, this will be taken forward in January.
- UKAS will visit 28<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> March 2023.
- A full request for Project Weaver funding has been sent to Scottish Government which includes a draft budget for 23/24.

Fiona Douglas, Director of Forensic Services and Paul Edie, Chair of the Oversight Group paid tribute to all those involved in the delivery of Project Weaver.

**Drug Spiking Casework Update** – Members were assured by a report detailing updates on spiking cases being received by Forensic Services. Forensic Services will engage further with COPFS directly on the analysis period for drug spiking cases.

**Risk Management** – Members were provided with an overview of the report which provided an opportunity to review FS Operational Risks relevant to the remit of the group. Members had a detailed discussion around the risks noted, including the requirement for further strategic workforce planning and mitigation of potential incidents of vial breakage, and were assured by the responses provided.