



Meeting	Forensic Services Committee
Date	8th May 2025
Location	Webex
Title of Paper	Forensic Services Performance Report – Quarter 4 2024/25
Presented By	Vicki Morton, Chief Operating Officer, Forensic Services
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached	Forensic Services Performance Report Q4 2024/25

PURPOSE

To present Forensic Services Performance Report, Q4 2024/25 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 Performance Report is presented for Q4 2024/25.
- 1.2 This report captures activity conducted across SPA Forensic Services and aligns to the [Forensic Services Strategy](#) and the Forensic Services Performance Framework.
- 1.3 The report demonstrates 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;
 - Reporting of targets against those set out in the Memorandum of Understanding with Police Scotland and COPFS.

2. FORENSIC SERVICES PERFORMANCE REPORT – Q4 2024/25

2.1 Report appended.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no financial implications in this report.

4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no personnel implications in this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no legal implications in this report.

6. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no reputational implications in this report.

7. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no social implications in this report.

8. COMMUNITY IMPACT

8.1 There are no community implications in this report.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no equality implications in this report.

10. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no environmental implications in this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are invited to discuss the information provided in this report.

OFFICIAL

Forensic Services Report 2024/25: Quarter 4



OFFICIAL

Business area	Page	Business area	Page
Executive summary	3	Our People – Short- and long-term absence	10
Balanced Scorecard summary	4	Quality compliance	11
Business Plan compliance	5	Overview – Search & Recovery Scenes	12
Performance Framework status	6-7	Overview – Laboratory delivery	13
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OFFICIAL			

Overall, performance continues to be strong for urgent casework and scene attendance. The active caseload within Forensic Services has reduced, with 1580 cases less than the same time last year, due to improvements from the new ways of working and a decrease in overall demand.

Scene incident response within 24 hours has a YTD compliance of 89% against a 90% target, and for the most urgent of scenes (groups 1,2 & 8) the YTD compliance is 96%.

In March, Forensic Services supported Police Scotland as part of a public health concern following a reported increase in fatal and near fatal drugs overdoses. The forensic analysis indicated Nitazene-type opioids in some heroin samples, and involved work across Drugs and Post-mortem Toxicology.

Resource challenges in acquisitive volume-type DNA analysis were due to the continuing transition of work from a 1 site model to a two-site model. Consequently, the performance status remained at amber.

There has been no change to the top 3 overall absence reasons with both psychological and musculoskeletal absences showing a decrease in Q4. The number of working days lost decreased from Q3 to Q4 and is trending at 700 days less than 2023-24.

In Q4, there was another significant number of reported instances of Positive Feedback, with 23 recorded this quarter. This feedback was from various partners including Police Scotland and COPFS. A higher number of complaints were received, 6 within Q4. The number of complaints remain relatively low and mostly relate to the timeliness of scene attendance.

The Scottish Biometrics Commissioner published the "Joint Assurance Review of the acquisition, retention, use of DNA for criminal justice and police purposes in Scotland" in February and the recommendations are being taken forward into the next FY.

Our Partners

5-year demand forecasting	●
Implement the new Performance Framework reporting	●
Deliver a Joint Biometrics Strategy with PS	●

RAG status key

Completed

Started / on track

Started / issues being managed and monitored closely

Started / issues in need of attention

Our People

Implement an apprenticeship pathway	●
Proactive management of long-term absence return	●
Embed the new management structure	●



Our Resources

Develop a FBC and secure funding for the drug driving long term sustainable model	●
Deliver the 2024-25 efficiencies plan	●
Develop a FBC and secure funding for a new Core Operating System	●

Our Processes

Develop a long-term Digital & Data plan	●
Deliver the refreshed Criminal Toxicology improvement plan	●
Deliver the Quality Improvement plan	●

This slide indicates the top 3 activities of the Business Plan to be delivered within 24/25. Points of note:-
















- 24/25 efficiencies plan has been delivered; further work is ongoing to consider efficiency saving opportunities in 25/26.
- Long-term Digital and Data Plan is under review with support from Digital Division.
- Delivery of the Quality Improvement Plan is being monitored closely, with targets for 25/26 being set.
















Business Plan -2024 to 2026

	Completed	Started/on track	Started /issues being managed and monitored closely	Started / issues in need of attention
Our People	1	5	2	0
Our Resources	1	2	2	0
Our Processes	1	3	4	0
Our Partners	0	6	1	0

Since the previous report, 2 further activities have been completed, and 3 have moved from on track (green) to issues being managed and monitored closely (amber). There are no significant risks at this time in terms of completion of the Business Plan activities.

The refreshed Forensic Services Strategy provides an opportunity to review the Business Plan to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

	Activity	STATUS Q4 2024-25	STATUS Q3 2024-25	Year to Date	Comments	Rag status key
Strategic Outcome 1 Our people are supported through a positive working environment, enabling them to provide excellent forensic services	Absence rate				In general absence rates have reduced from Q3 and are within tolerance levels.	On track
	Reporting of injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 - HSE				No RIDDORs reported in Q4. 1 x RIDDOR in Q2.	Issues being managed and monitored closely
	Management Training				Ongoing and on track	Issues in need of attention
Strategic Outcome 2 Forensic Services are sustainable, adaptable and prepared for future challenges	Compliance to Business Plan				No current emerging issues	The status of key aspects of our Performance Framework is positive with the majority assessed as green/on track.
	Compliance to Operating Model – budget constraints withstanding				Phase 3 of the changes in the Op Model are complete. Phase 4 changes are in progress	

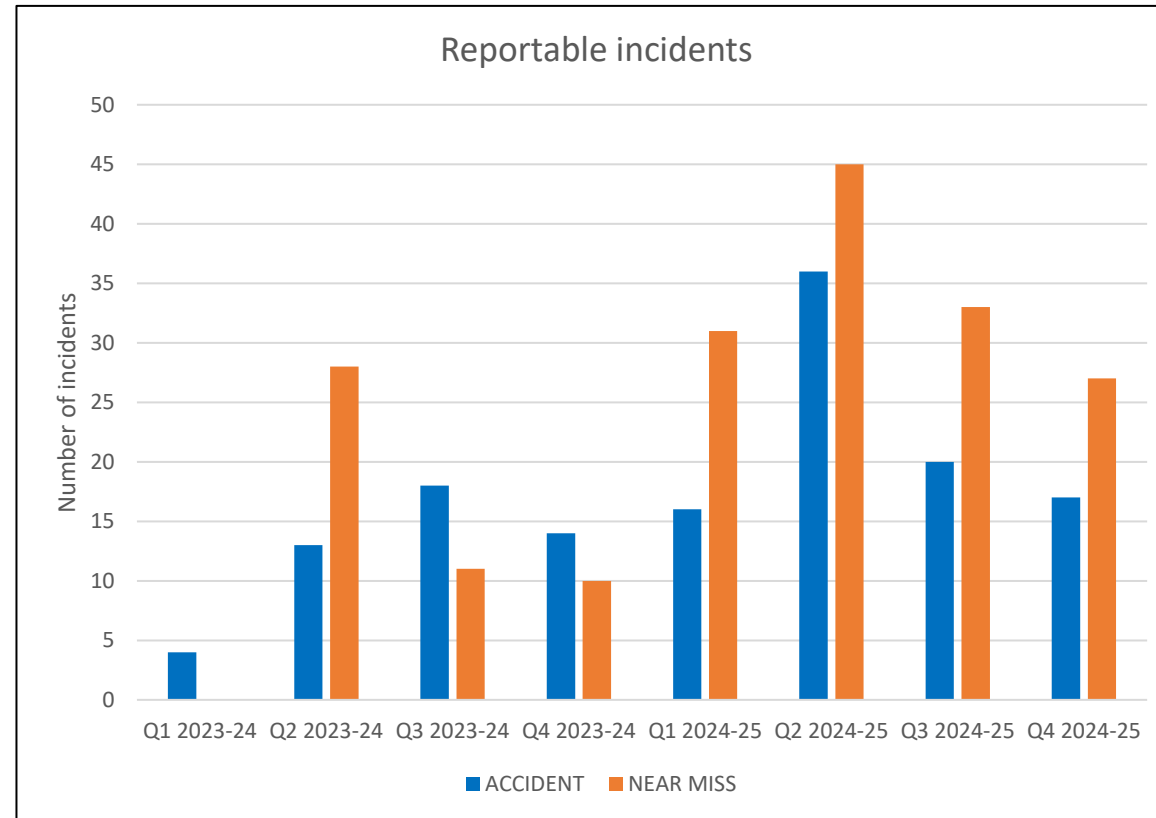
	Activity	STATUS Q4 2024-25	STATUS Q3 2024-25	Year to Date	Comments	Rag status key
						On track
						Issues being managed and monitored closely
						Issues in need of attention
Strategic Outcome 2 Forensic Services are sustainable, adaptable and prepared for future challenges	All performance data				Overall performance is good. Areas for improvement are highlighted in the internal performance status (slide15)	<div>Performance data has been assessed as amber as there are internal areas of Forensic Services which are being managed and monitored closely, as noted later in this report. The assessment against the Performance Framework provides assurance that the key internal processes to set, deliver, monitor, and report on our strategic priorities are effective. We strive for continuous improvement, as set out in our Business Plan for 2024-2026.</div>
	Capital and Revenue plan (Inc. efficiencies)				Q4 end within predicted tolerance	
Strategic Outcome 3 Forensic Services deliver high-quality, ethical services; and leads to advance forensic science	Compliance to UKAS ISO17025				This financial year’s round of accreditation assessments have concluded with accreditation status maintained.	
Strategic Outcome 4 Forensic Services work collaboratively with partners to serve the needs of the public and Criminal Justice in Scotland	Partnership working				Biometrics Joint Strategy document is at the review stage with Forensic Services and Police Scotland. On track for completion against the target date.	
	Public Confidence in Forensic Services				Good feedback from Police Scotland on work of Forensic Services.	

Staff Health & Safety champions have been appointed to join a working group to instil a positive culture of improvement and ownership of related matters and actions. Staff are continuing to be encouraged to raise near miss reports to assist issue resolution.

An external online Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) Health and Safety in the Workplace training course has been launched across Forensic Services.

Ongoing issues with local exhaust ventilation (LEV) systems in SCC have continued in Q4. Forensic Services are working closely with Police Scotland Estates and Health & Safety and trade unions to ensure this is resolved as quickly as possible. An impact has been seen on operational casework in the Search and Recovery Laboratory capability and is being monitored closely. There is no risk of statutory timescales not being met. Considerations for our other sites are being taken forward.

Accident/Near Miss statistical trend

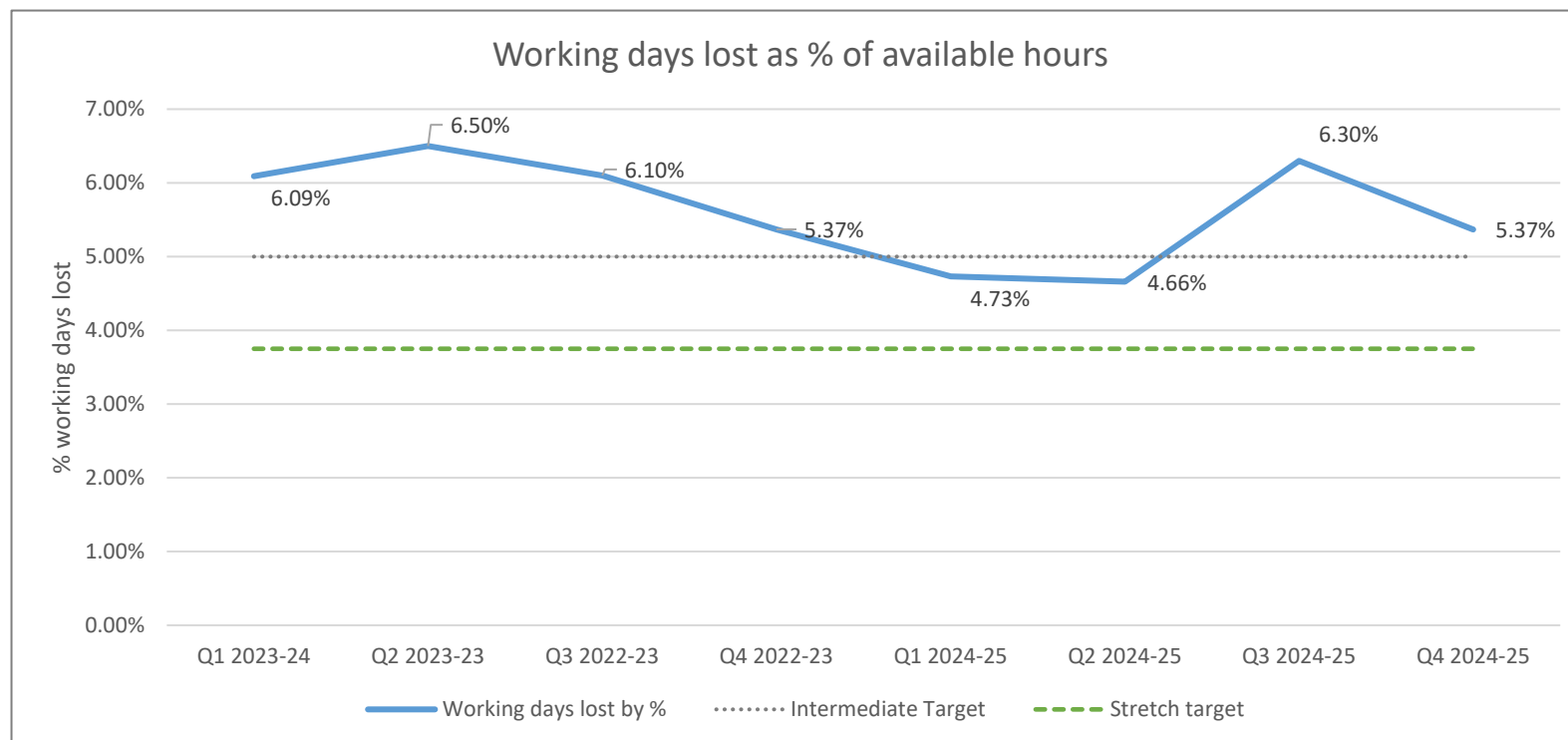


Risk Status: Low

RIDDOR - Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations - Zero in Q4.

The regulations require the reporting to HSE of deaths at work, major injuries caused by accidents at work, some work-related diseases, dangerous occurrences and gas incidents.

The number of available hours equates to the full-time equivalent for that month multiplied by the number of working days in the month. The number of working days lost relates to sickness absence days logged in the People & Development management system.



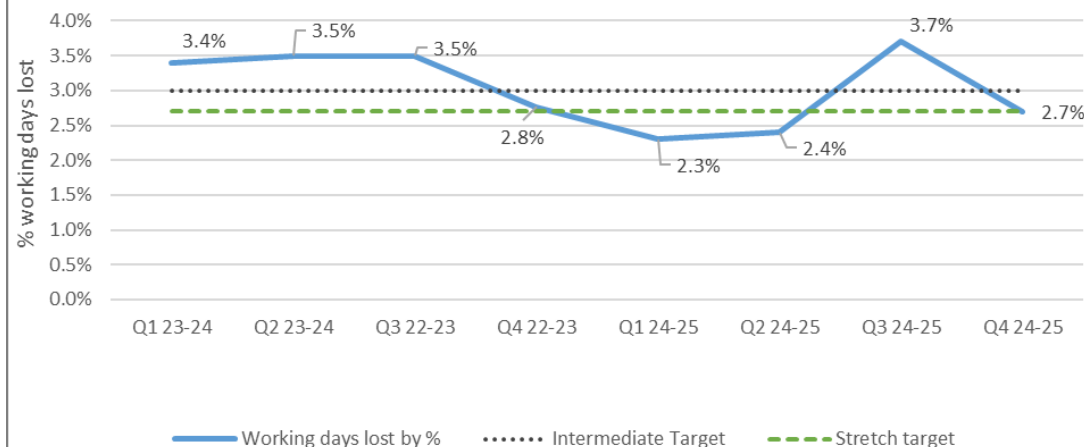
Target (stretch)
5% (3.75%)

Absence includes health, injury, work-related issues, bereavement, and others grouped as miscellaneous reasons.

The top 3 absence reasons are; Psychological, Respiratory and Musco-skeletal all of which have decreased from Q3 to Q4.

The number of working days lost has decreased from Q3 to Q4 and is 700 days less than 2023-24. Although for the latter two quarters Forensic Services are above the internal set target, it has decreased from Q3.

Long term absences as % available hours



LTA target (stretch)
3% (2.7%)

Last FY Av. 3.4%
YTD Av. 2.9%

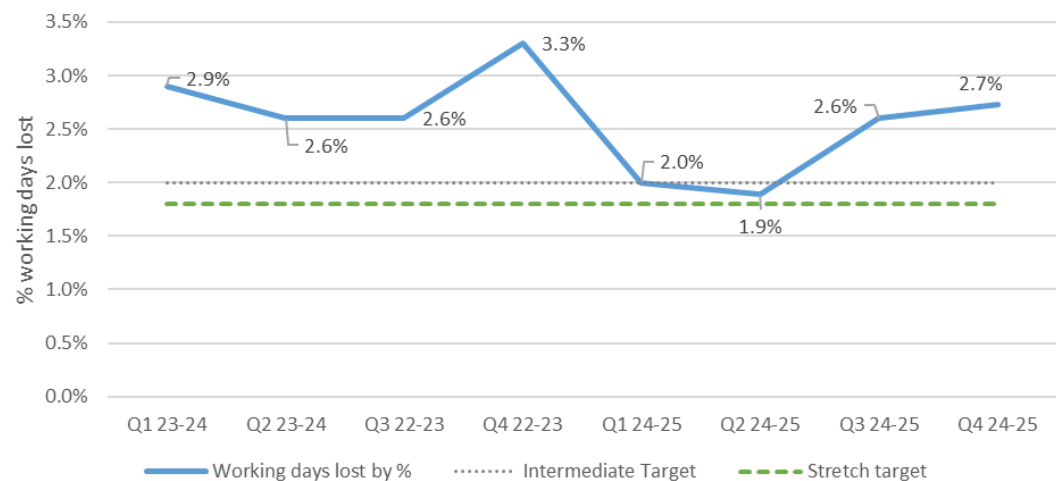
Long term absence (LTA) is defined as any period over 28 working days.

While over 50% of LTA is attributable to psychological absences, there has been a significant reduction in this category – 1,300 fewer days this year than last.

STA target (stretch)
2% (1.8%)

Last FY Av. 2.6%
YTD Av. 2.4%

Short term absences as % of available hours

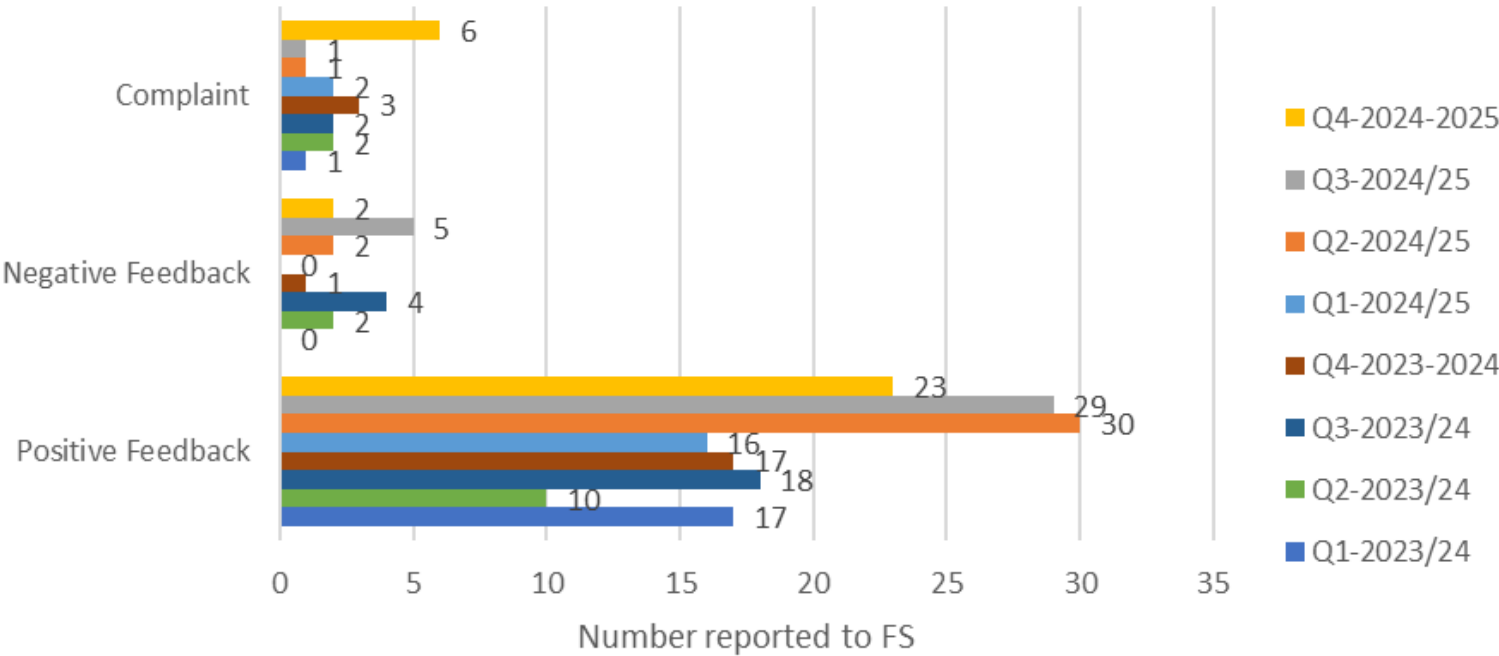


Short-term absence (STA) is any period less than 28 working days. Some STAs can also be retrospectively amended to an LTA depending on absence length, hence the Q3 % figure on the graph being revised down from the last report.

There is a more varied profile of absence reasons attributable to STA, with respiratory being the most common.

Overall, absence levels remain relatively low.

Forensic Services Feedback FY Q1-4 2023-24, Q1-4 2024-25

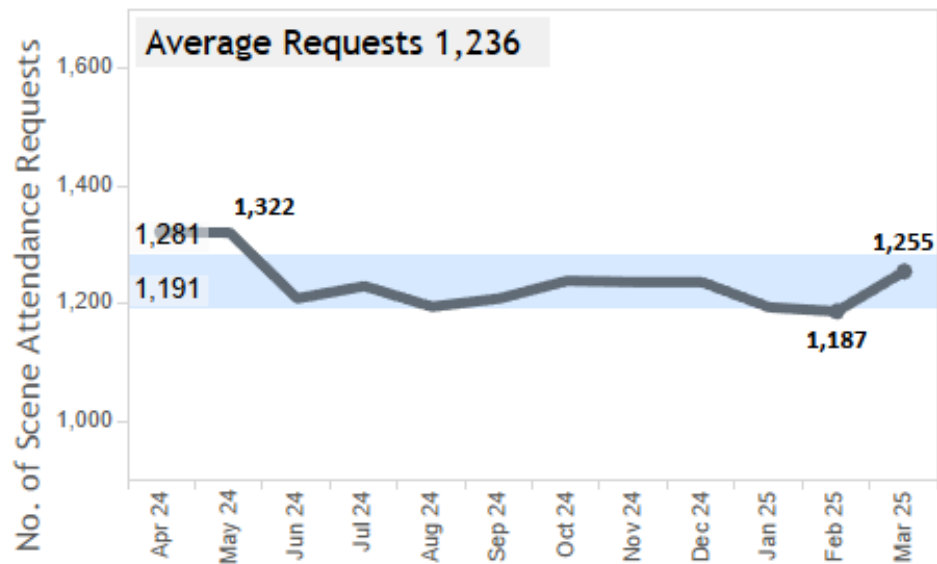


The findings raised through Forensic Services 2024 UKAS assessment programme are almost completely closed out with only 6% outstanding. All are within the expected target date and expect to be closed in Apr/May 2025.

As previously reported, progress on the UKAS requirements regarding GEN6 - *‘Reference to accreditation and multilateral recognition signatory status by UKAS-accredited bodies’* is continuing and is being taken forward after further discussions with COPFS.

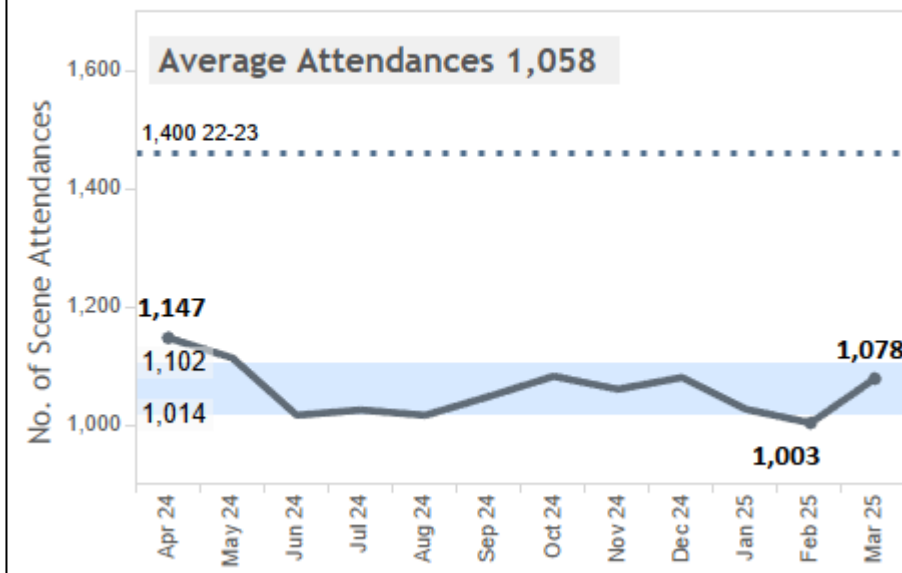
Planning for the 2025-2026 UKAS re-assessment programme has already begun, with dates in October and November 2025 reserved.

In Q4, there was another significant number of reported instances of Positive Feedback, with 23 recorded this quarter. This feedback was from various partners including Police Scotland and COPFS. There were six complaints received in Q4. These were related to scene attendance and were reported during this period by Police Scotland, relating to the timeliness and availability of staff. All negative feedback and complaints are reviewed, documented and actions identified for improvement action where necessary and required.

SCENE EXAMINATION REQUESTS

Members from FS and PS continue to discuss scene requests as part of a short life working group.

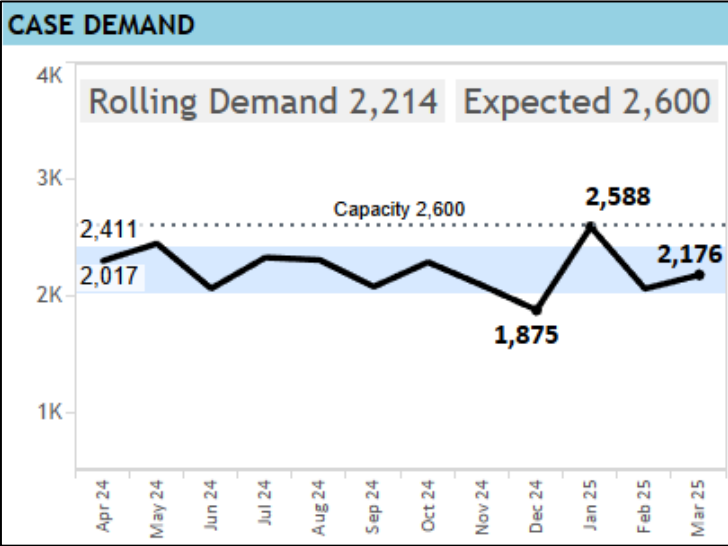
Further work is ongoing internally to streamline the end-to-end process for attendance.

SCENE EXAMINATION ATTENDANCES

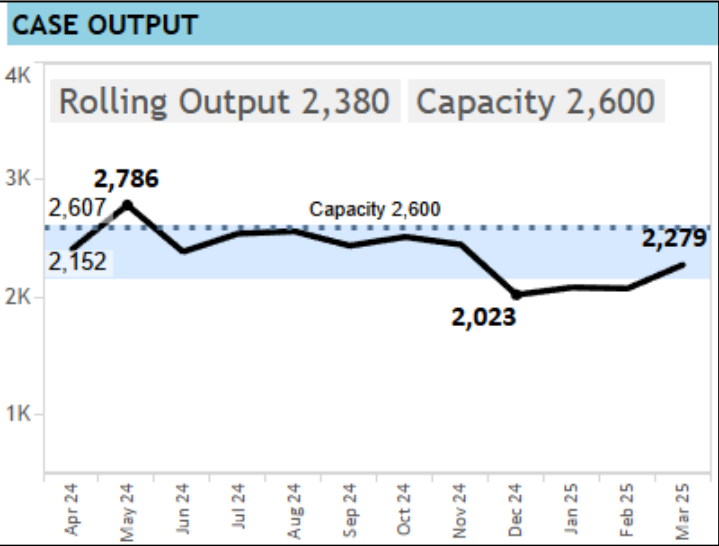
In Q4, there continues to be a slight increase in requests for scene attendance, but this has not yet returned to expected levels. Attendance within 24 hours, or an agreed/scheduled appointment, was 90% compliant (vs 90% target) in January and March. February was at 87% compliance bringing the quarterly average down slightly, but a strong performance was seen overall (89%).

In Q4 17.5% of triaged requests resulted in no attendance, a reduction from the 19% reported in Q2 and Q3, suggesting fewer no-value requests are being made by Police Scotland. The non-attendance rate had been 13% before the establishment of the Forensic Services Scenes Tasking Unit.

Q4 casework demand is up on Q3 but is trending 5% lower than this time last year (250 cases less). Active caseload is 1580 less than the same time last year which is a 20% reduction. The spike seen in January was due to the delayed internal submissions into Acquisitive Crime analysis (DNA) and was anticipated. A lower resource availability due to the transition from a 1 site to 2 site delivery model has resulted in an increase in caseload in this area and the number of overdue cases. However, there is no risk of cases being time barred and the overall caseload in Forensic Services remains lower than in April 2024. During 2025-26 when new processes are embedded, improvement is forecast.

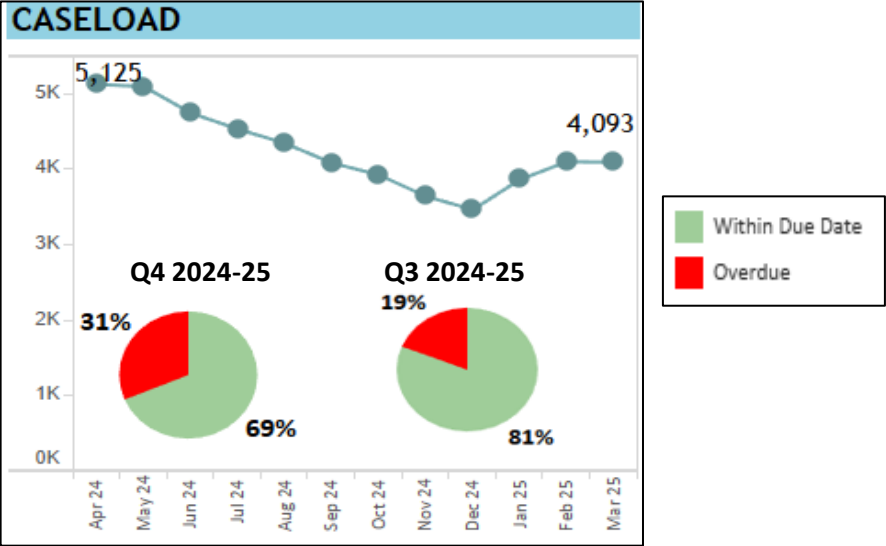


The **demand** graph above represents the actual average monthly demand level at 2,315 cases. The blue shaded area indicates the expected natural variation trend. Any point out with these boundaries will be reviewed and any business risk highlighted. Engagement with Police Scotland to understand the reduction in demand is ongoing.



The **output** graph above represents the predicted monthly capacity level at 2,600 cases and the actual output achieved including outsourced activity.

The data shows that demand and output are broadly in balance across the organisation.



The above graph represents the **number of cases currently open and being worked on** in Forensic Services. The pie chart represents the % of cases which meet our internal targets and those which have passed their delivery date.

Delivery dates are calculated from the priority of the case which is assigned by COPFS or Police Scotland.



Service Delivery	Target	Current Quarter status			Previous Quarter status			Year to Date
Seven-day custody requests from customer	95%	↔	99% (138)	●	98% (150)	●	98% (651)	●
COPFS – urgent delivery requests	85-95%	↓	86% (292)	●	91% (262)	●	89% (959)	●
COPFS – all delivery requests	80-95%	↓	78% (1,772)	●	82% (1,869)	●	82% (6,443)	●
PSoS – Priority 1 delivery requests	75-85%	↓	86% (726)	●	93% (614)	●	91% (2,409)	●
PSoS – Priority 2 delivery requests	75-85%	↓	36% (772)	●	48% (949)	●	49% (4,005)	●
PSoS – Priority 3 delivery requests	65%	↔	80% (1,929)	●	81% (2,411)	●	65% (9,329)	●

Rag status key

On track

Issues being managed and monitored closely

Issues in need of attention

Measured in calendar days

COPFS

Seven-day custody: typically, fewer than five days to complete.

Other COPFS requests: customer determined.

Police Scotland:









































Priority 1: 7 days or less to complete.

Priority 2: 8 -60 days to complete.
Exception - VCU case target is 21 days

Priority 3: 60-150 days to complete.

Urgent and priority demands from COPFS and Police Scotland are continuing to be met with their timeliness relatively stable. There has been a reduction in timeliness in the routine COPFS requests in Biology due to ongoing training as part of the new Operating Model transition, however compliance has improved towards the end of the quarter.

Police Scotland P2 cases are largely VCU DNA cases with a target of 21 days. Ongoing training and transition to a 2-site delivery model has impacted timeliness. Although this target is not routinely being met, results are reported in less than 30 days and there is no risk of cases being time barred.

Business area	2024-25 Q4	2024-25 Q3	2024-25 Q2	2024-25 Q1
Search and Recovery Scenes				
Biology				
Volume Crime Unit				
Drugs				
Fingerprints				
Chemistry & Documents				
Drug Driving Section 4 & 5A turnarounds				
Criminal Toxicology				
Postmortem Toxicology				
Firearms				

This chart details the performance of all areas across Forensic Services and how we assess internal compliance against the RAG status key.

RAG status key
On track
Issues being managed and monitored closely
Issues in need of attention

Scene examination incident response within 24 hours has achieved two of the three months of the quarter at compliance for attendance within 24 hrs of request with a YTD of 89% against a 90% target. Groups 1,2 & 8 has a YTD of 96% compliance.

Volume crime (DNA analysis) team are transitioning their case processing from a one site to a two-site delivery model. Staff are undergoing training to factually report outcomes in investigative cases. The move to the more efficient model will improve timeliness over the next FY.

Drugs rapid restricted analysis demand has returned to expected levels. In Q4, a public safety issue with drug fatal and near fatal overdoses were reported which was identified as a Nitazines-type opioid within heroin. Resources were diverted to this activity which reduced the output of other priority 2 casework.

Drug driving performance remains strong in Q4. In March both section 4 and 5A exceeded their 95% compliance target. The in-house output was at, or above, expected levels which, combined with outsourcing, has continued the upward trend for the last 3 months. Therefore, the status has been defined as green (on track).

Postmortem Toxicology performance has dipped due to an increase in staff absence (maternity and long-term sickness), instrumentation downtime and introducing a new test method for Nitazines. Urgent casework targets are not being met however dialogue with COPFS and Pathology providers highlight no serious concerns in this regard.

Firearms COPFS KPI compliance to all delivery requests are above target. Incremental improvement through the quarter has been achieved for priority 3 casework. Caseload has reduced from 186 in July 2024 to 80 at the end of March 2025 therefore, the overall status has moved from red to amber (issues being managed and monitored).