



Meeting	Forensic Services Committee
Date	4th May 2023
Location	Via MS Team
Title of Paper	Project Weaver – closure report
Presented By	Alan Connell, Head of Forensic Infrastructure and Support
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached	No

PURPOSE

To present Members with the Project Weaver closure report.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In 2019 and 2020 there were extensive well-publicised delays to the Post Mortem Toxicology service beyond the five-week target due to a lack of resource, strategy and long-term future plans. These led to critical media headlines, complaints from families, questions in the Scottish Parliament and delays in the reporting of the drug-death statistics.
- 1.2 The purpose of Project Weaver was to transition Post Mortem Toxicology services from the University of Glasgow to Forensic Services and embed the transitioned service as a Scottish Government fully-funded and integrated business-as-usual function.
- 1.3 The benefits of the integration of Post Mortem Toxicology with Forensic Services enables:
 - A holistic forensic response to Police Scotland and COPFS;
 - Real-time integrated intelligence;
 - A single point of co-ordination to support drugs deaths initiatives;
 - Enhanced career opportunities for existing and transferring staff.

2. FURTHER DETAILS

- 2.1 The original site for the service to be provided was scoped prior to the initiation of Project Weaver and had an initial date of transition forecast as 1st April 2022. Project Weaver was initiated on 11th December 2021 and provided executive steering and governance from both Police Scotland and Forensic Services Senior Management Team members.
- 2.2 The initial proposed site was deemed unsuitable due to ICT security issues with the infrastructure so a new location had to be identified. Police Scotland Estates worked with Avison Young to identify a suitable location quickly and a business case for the proposed new premises at Junction 24 Business Park, Govan, Glasgow, was submitted and approved by Scottish Government.
- 2.3 By July 2021 there was agreement for the go-live date to be moved from 1st April 2022 to 1st December 2022 with the University of Glasgow and COPFS agreeing to extend their contract until 30th November 2022. This was due to the impact that the change in location had in the project plan. In addition a financial model was

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refined, submitted and agreed with Scottish Government for all planned expenditure for 2021/2022 financial year.

- 2.4 Given that assurances were in place for funding, location and the overall timeline of the project, a formal announcement was made on 9th July 2021 by the Scottish Government - who confirmed a £6M investment to fund a new laboratory and the transfer of Post Mortem Toxicology services from the University of Glasgow to SPA Forensic Services.
- 2.5 The project was structured around the following work-streams: Estates; Procurement; Digital Division; HR/Legal; Communications; Finance; and Forensic Services. The project was supported by Grant Thornton Consultancy and had a Gold group structure implemented by Police Scotland's Deputy Chief Officer and the Director of Forensic Services - as the leads of the executive steering group.
- 2.6 The transfer of the service to Forensic Services was completed successfully thanks to the flexible approach taken by the staff, Trade Unions, COPFS, University of Glasgow, Police Scotland, Scottish Government, and Forensic Services working together to ensure the continuation of the service to delivering the pre-existing contract while setting up the new laboratory in Govan.
- 2.7 This level of engagement ensured any issues were dealt with early and the transfer was managed smoothly under TUPE with a total of 24 posts being transferred on the 1st December 2022 to Forensic Services.
- 2.8 The project lessons learned were wide and ranging: from the outset, the implementation of the executive steering group gold wrap around introduced both governance and subject matter expertise - which helped the project take shape.
- 2.9 Due to the delays in some estates snagging work and network instrumentation set up challenges, development work in the new laboratory continues, while integrating the new staff into Forensic Services. It is clear that earlier delays in the project has resulted in additional development work being required alongside early service delivery.
- 2.10 The preparation of laboratories, including a number of rooms with different functions and equipment, are all working as expected and we have worked through all the initial set-up hurdles. These laboratories are now in regular use with everything going well and

the staff are enjoying the well-thought out space and facilities, which was commented on positively during a recent UKAS visit.

- 2.11 In terms of the Analytical Instrumentation: two out of the three main pieces of analytical instrumentation (GC-MS x 4 and GC-FID x 3) have been commissioned, test methods have been validated on these and casework is being run regularly. While they are working routinely, there are still some odd errors which appear and we are working through these with Digital Division and the manufacturers (Agilent). At the moment these errors are not hampering progress but we would like to resolve these for the longer-term stability of these instruments.
- 2.12 The remaining instruments are the 4 x LCMS - which will be the workhorses of the service. Access to these instruments has been delayed significantly with only access to one non-networked instrument in August 2022, three networked instruments in mid-Nov 2022, and the fourth completed in mid-Feb 2023. An accumulation of delays throughout the project has brought these most complex bits of equipment into service last.
- 2.13 There are six major tests to develop and validate on these pieces of equipment. These tests are complex, involving analysis of around 150 individual compounds. Progress has been hampered by ICT errors and the time taken to investigate and resolve these issues. Progress has taken longer due to the complex nature of the tests: getting used to both the hardware with different capabilities and the new software to control and process the data, this is as a result of having new models of equipment which required scientists to become familiar with this cutting edge instrumentation.
- 2.14 Networking of all the instrumentation has been a significant task for all involved and, while we have managed to achieve this for the majority, we are still dealing with significant errors which are being worked through. Once these have all been teased out, longer-term running will be assured.
- 2.15 One item which has still to be resolved is the back-up of raw data. Due to the networked nature of the instruments this should be easily done automatically, however, due to problems acquiring data directly over the network, and the subsequent complex data files produced, this has not been possible to date. Currently data is acquired locally and the longer-term move to a networked drive is still to be investigated/decided.

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- 2.16 The time required from Police Scotland Digital Division and from on-site scientists to assist in this is significant and, this we has been deprioritised to focus on the test method set-up and will re-visit once we have freed up scientists time.
- 2.17 For the estate: all of the snagging has been completed and involvement with the Project Weaver estates has been completed. There are still two pieces of capital equipment to be installed. While this equipment is not critical to the initial service delivery, it will provide longer-term future proofing for the service. Additional work such as additional power sockets and holes drilled to enable these to be installed, had been delayed and was completed in April.
- 2.18 In terms of case work: the service team receive post mortem cases from three mortuaries (Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee) multiple times each week, and a further three mortuaries less regularly (Crosshouse, D&G and Forth Valley).
- 2.19 The numbers of cases the team receive each week on week is very volatile but averages just over 70 cases each week. Of these, around 5% of these cases are potentially court going cases (e.g. homicides, deaths in custody, paediatric); around 40% are drug-related deaths; and the rest are a mixture of unexpected natural causes or suicides.
- 2.20 Since October 2022, the service have been outsourcing cases to reduce the burden and enable the University of Glasgow to complete all testing prior to transfer on 1st December 2022. This outsourcing contract was set-up and managed by COPFS.
- 2.21 Test Method Set-Up and Validation: out of 10 test methods which need to be set-up to deliver a minimum service to COPFS, four have gone through the complete process and we are now able to report these results. The remaining six have all been started and are at varying stages. The intention is to have these signed-off to enable the team to start reporting more cases from the week beginning 24th April. Most cases will require most of these tests, which is why we need all tests signed-off to report significant numbers of cases.
- 2.22 The service has had a successful UKAS assessment after their visit on the 28/29th March 2023 and this resulted in a recommendation to include the new Govan laboratory in the scope of accreditation - following close-out of minor actions. The team have plans in place to complete all these actions by the end of June deadline. We received significant support from the Forensic Services Quality team, which was welcome and required due to the transferring staff

being unfamiliar with Q-Pulse (a quality management system software solution) and general processes within Forensic Services.

- 2.23 The service will have the alcohol test on our scope of accreditation and this will include the ability to test Section 5 Road Traffic cases, allowing some business continuity capacity in the longer term. The long-term accreditation timeline is being revised given the issues in the instrumentation set-up.
- 2.24 Members of the Forensic Services Committee, who have yet to have an opportunity to visit the new Forensic Services laboratory, are welcome to come and see the new state-of-the-art facilities and the successful delivery of Project Weaver.
- 2.25 In summary, Project Weaver was delivered on time thanks to the excellent partnership working across the justice sector partners and the University of Glasgow. This was supported by a good project management and governance regimes and is the more remarkable by being delivered and during the pandemic.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 Project Weaver was funded by the Scottish Government

Project Weaver Total Costs - 20 21 - 22 23

Actual spend				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	Total
Capital	0	3,419,371	645,445	4,064,816
Revenue	181,216	886,990	1,598,399	2,666,605
				6,731,421

4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There were direct personnel implications associated with this paper in relation to:
 - TUPE of the University of Glasgow staff to SPA
 - Forensic Services staff support
 - Corporate Services support staff in Police Scotland

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There were legal implications associated with this paper in relation to:
- Service contracts being established between the COPFS and SPA for service transition and service delivery of Post Mortem Toxicology services.

6. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There were reputational implications associated with this service provision for all parties; SPA, COPFS, Scottish Government and University of Glasgow.

7. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There no direct social implications in this report.

8. COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 8.1 There would be an impact to the communities across Scotland, if Post Mortem Toxicology services were not to be provided on a timely basis. As well as the knock on impact in providing death certificates to families of the deceased, the information for example on drugs of misuse, found in drugs deaths, could prevent public health initiatives focusing on areas of highest risk.
- 8.2 When all data from Post Mortem Toxicology can be shared easily in Forensic Services, these results could help the development of valuable police intelligence. This could mean opportunities for an improved understanding of drug supply chains which can adversely affect communities.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no direct equality implications associated with this paper.

10. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no direct environmental implications associated with this paper.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are invited to discuss.