



Agenda Item 3.1

Meeting	Forensic Services Committee
Date	1st February 2023
Location	Via MS Teams
Title of Paper	Forensic Services Director's report
Presented By	Fiona Douglas, Director of Forensic Services
Recommendation to Members	For noting
Appendix Attached	No

PURPOSE

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

1. Updates

Budget

- 1.1. I and others member of the Forensic Services Senior Management Team have continued to hold meetings with the SPA Chief Executive, the SPA Chair, the Chair of the Forensic Services Committee, members of SPA and others since the Scottish Government finalised and announce its budget in December. While the exact budget details of the Forensic Services 2023-24 budget allocation have yet to be finalised, the funding is above the flat-cash settlement indicated previously.
- 1.2. We are now working through how to implement and deliver our New Operating Model given the changed budgetary position since we the Final Business Case was approved by the Authority in September 2021.

Project Weaver

- 1.3. The transfer of Post Mortem Toxicology services to Forensic Services was delivered on 1 December 2022 with the staff transferring across to SPA Forensic Services from the University of Glasgow. Our new team have been busy setting up the laboratory to deliver this important service.
- 1.4. The success of this £6m project was helped by the flexible and pragmatic approach taken by all partners and stakeholders - including COPFS, University of Glasgow, Police Scotland, SPA Corporate, Scottish Government and trades unions – which also meant that the transfer has been achieved with no backlog of Post Mortem Toxicology cases.
- 1.5. We have held initial meetings to make sure we capture the lessons learnt from this project and these will continue. There will be a formal naming and opening of the new laboratory during the next few months – this is the fifth main Forensic Services laboratory and the latest since the opening of the Scottish Crime Campus nearly a decade ago.

Biometrics Commissioner

- 1.6. Forensic Services welcome the comments by the Scottish Biometrics Commissioner Dr Brian Plastow at the SPA Authority Meeting in November about the “world-leading service” Forensic Services

deliver and our “real openness and transparency”.

- 1.7. At the meeting Dr Plastow said: “SPA Forensic Services offer one of the most advanced DNA interpretation and analysis capabilities in world policing.” We will continue to work with Dr Plastow to ensure we use biometric data in a manner which is ethically responsible, legislatively compliant, and respects the rights of individuals, while at the same time facilitates its use in the investigation and resolution of crime.

SPA Toxicology Oversight Group

- 1.8. Following the completion of the work of the SPA Forensic Toxicology Oversight Group, SPA Forensic Services will continue to provide the committee with regular detailed updates on drug-driving and toxicology developments.
- 1.9. We await the outcome of the HMICS Assurance Review of the SPA Forensic Toxicology Provision which is expected to be issued in the next few weeks. The review, which considers the end-to-end process for obtaining, analysing and reporting drug driving blood sample results in order to support criminal proceedings, was requested by the Chair of SPA.

Mental health

- 1.10. There was media interest and considerable social media discussion about the pilot project to look at incorporating psychological supervision into professional practice. Forensic Services have commissioned this project to support members of our staff who are regularly exposed to traumatic scenes or images.
- 1.11. Organised by the SPA Forensic Services Leadership Development Programme Lead, and currently in procurement, this three-year project is part of our ongoing commitment to ensuring the wellbeing of all SPA Forensic Services staff so they are safe, supported and empowered to deliver world-class forensic services.

Perth Fire

- 1.12. Forensic Scientists across several disciplines, co-ordinated by the Chemistry & Documents Team at the Scottish Crime Campus, have been supporting the Police Scotland and Scottish Fire & Rescue Services investigations into the fire at a hotel in Perth on 2 January 2023 where three people died.

Forensic Science Value Steering Working Group

- 1.13. At the December meeting of the Forensic Science Value Working Group, which is chaired by a member of the SPA Forensic Services Committee, Professor Niamh NicDaeid from the Leverhulme Research Centre at the University of Dundee proposed research which will support the outcomes of the group.
- 1.14. This research, which will be funded by Leverhulme Research Centre, will focus on Violence against Women and Girls and enhance the map of the justice system to articulate the forensic evidence impact of particular scenarios and across different groups.

Committee Development Day

- 1.15. Members of the SPA Forensic Services Committee attended a development day at the Scottish Crime Campus on 19 January where they were given presentations about Firearms, a cold case review, visual reconstruction, and acquisitive crime.
- 1.16. There were also discussions around the 2023-2024 budget and updates on the implementation phase of the change programme, the Strategic Work Force Plan and the Performance Framework.

Women in Policing

- 1.17. The achievements of two SPA Forensic Services staff - Chief Operating Officer Dr Vicki Morton and Forensic Scene Examiner Fiona Alexander – have been recognised in the Scottish Women’s Development Forum project *Women in Policing*.
- 1.18. This project both celebrates and recognises the amazing diverse members of the Scottish Women’s Development Forum in a book which has been published to capture their inspiring personal and professional life stories.

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.