



Agenda Item 7

Meeting	Forensic Services Committee
Date	7th May 2024
Location	Via MS Teams
Title of Paper	Forensic Performance Improvement Group Update
Presented By	Fiona Douglas, Director of Forensic Services
Recommendation to Members	For noting
Appendix Attached	No

PURPOSE

To update members on issues discussed at the Forensic Performance Improvement Group (FPIG).

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The Forensic Performance Improvement Group consists of key stakeholders and representatives from Police Scotland, COPFS and Forensic Services and is chaired by the ACC Major Crime and Public Protection.
- 1.2. The purpose of the Forensic Performance Improvement Group is to ensure:
 - There is an oversight group with representation from Police Scotland, COPFS, Forensic Services
 - To monitor performance and effective utilisation of Forensic Services
 - To make decisions on relevant and appropriate forensic Science-related issues
 - To maximise best value of forensic science in Scotland

2. FURTHER DETAIL ON REPORT TOPIC

Good practice and achievements

- 2.1 At the meeting of the Forensic Performance Improvement Group (FPIG) held on 7th March 2024, there was discussion of a refreshed FPIG Terms of Reference, which will include a review of the current agenda and discussions are ongoing with members of the group.
- 2.2 The Forensic Services Head of Forensic Infrastructure and Support updated the members on a plan for Forensic Services to move to a “paper light” environment and are currently reviewing the process of submitting reports. Forensic Services are keen to engage with COPFS to propose a new e-signatures process, similar to the one already in use by Police Scotland.
- 2.3 Police Scotland updated the group on the recent progress of the new Forensic Services Scene Examination Tasking Unit. New feedback forms – to tackle operational issues when the unit was created and discussed at previous FPIG meetings – which were put in place for divisions to report any issues directly back to Forensic Services to allow them to be actioned quickly, are working effectively; the feedback forms have already proved to be of benefit with improved service.
- 2.4 The Forensic Services Chief Operating Officer informed members about the recent external review of the Forensic Services Scene

Examination Tasking Unit. This review was conducted by the Metropolitan Police Service and the results will be available soon. The Forensic Services Chief Operating Officer also thanked partner agencies for their feedback and support with this new tasking unit.

- 2.5 Police Scotland updated members on the newly formed Biometrics team in place in Police Scotland, with a Head of Biometrics, Biometrics Data Lead and six Data Submissions Officers.

Key points from the meeting

- 2.6 The Forensic Services Chief Operating Officer provided an overview of the Forensic Services 23/24 Q3 Performance Report. Forensic Services are currently focusing on the turnaround times in volume crime and the timeliness of scene examinations, which has already seen some improvement. Forensic Services are currently in a strong position in terms of reporting against services delivery performance.
- 2.7 All members agreed the current FPIG risk register needs further review to ensure all appropriate risks are being captured. Members agreed to have a meeting between Police Scotland, Forensic Services and COPFS and Risk Managers from Police Scotland to further take this work forward.
- 2.8 The Director of Forensic Services confirmed the new Terms of Reference for the Short Life Working Group to produce a 5 year demand forecast has been circulated, and that the group will be meeting in the coming weeks to determine what Police Scotland and COPFS will require from Forensic Services.

Emerging issues

- 2.9 Forensic Services informed the group there had been a significant increase in the number of drug-driving samples submitted since the start of January, which by February had been more than 130 cases over and above the expected demand.
- 2.10 Forensic Services are currently meeting this imbalance by using outsourcing. Forensic Services are in regular consultation with Police Scotland Road Policing, who have confirmed the significant increase was a result of the festive drink/drug campaign which Police Scotland held in December 2023, and they expect the case load to return to the expected demand levels during the next few

months.

- 2.11 The outsourcing funding was agreed to ensure development work in Forensic Services could be carried out to allow the inhouse capacity to build to an estimated 270 per month next year. The funding for outsourcing has not been forecast to include demand above predicted levels.
- 2.12 With the anticipated change to the statutory time limit expected to revert to six months at some point during this fiscal year, Forensic Services, Police Scotland and the COPFS will need to ensure all drug driving cases from the 1st June 2024 are delivered within the six-month statutory time frame - from the incident through to COPFS proceedings and the timescales to achieve that set out in the Memorandum of Understanding.
- 2.13 The only way to ensure this is to outsource any cases over and above the level of capacity of Forensic Service when they are received. While this was discussed at the March meeting of the Forensic Performance Improvement Group, no members had any access to any funds to cover the costs of such outsourcing, should this become necessary.
- 2.14 Over and above this short-term issue, there is also still the requirement for a long-term sustainable model for drug driving.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are potential financial implications as highlighted above in this report from the cost of outsourcing.

4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct personnel implications in this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are potential legal implications in this report, if cases are lost because they become time barred.

6. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are potential reputational implications for SPA, Forensic Services and Police Scotland, if cases become time barred.

7. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no direct social implications in this report.

8. COMMUNITY IMPACT

8.1 There are potential community safety implications in this report, if people are not being prosecuted for drug-driving.

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 requested to note the information contained within this report.