

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Forensic Services Committee</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>25 April 2022</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>MS Teams</b>
<b>Title of Paper</b>	<b>Forensic Services Director's Report</b>
<b>Presented By</b>	<b>Fiona Douglas</b>
<b>Recommendation to Members</b>	<b>For noting</b>
<b>Appendix Attached</b>	

**PURPOSE**

To update members on the recent key activities across Forensic Services

**1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 This report is to update members on activities across Forensic Services since the last meeting of the Forensic Services Committee.

**2. UPDATES**

**COVID-19 cases**

- 2.1 The continued large number of cases of Covid-19 across Scotland has been reflected in staff absences in SPA Forensic Services. In spite of this, Forensic Services have been able to provide appropriate levels of service with staff continuing to work in the safe blended arrangement that has been in place over the past two years.
- 2.2 The health, wellbeing, and safety of all staff remains our priority, and we continue to work closely with Op Talla and People & Development Police Scotland colleagues on developing future working arrangements with plans for Hybrid working now being taken forward from 1 June.

**Senior Management Team restructure**

- 2.3 An update on the Senior Management Team (SMT) consultation was given to the Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee (JNCC) this month. Full documentation will be sent to the next month's JNCC to formally close the consultation period for the SMT restructure.
- 2.4 Approval was reached with JNCC to progress with the recruitment of several SMT posts (externally and internally) and this process has now started.

**Performance**

- 2.5 In spite of the challenges from the pandemic, performance across Forensic Services remains strong with capacity now matching demand in most areas. The key exception is for Toxicology, led by the continued pressures from drug-driving cases. The focus is now on reducing caseloads across all areas and driving incremental improvement in the timeliness of forensic casework.

### **New Operating Model**

- 2.6 An extensive consultation process on the New Operating Model for Forensic Services is progressing well, with significant engagement events being undertaken with staff across Forensic Services. A number of ideas from staff are being evaluated and a detailed thorough process is in place to consider these and to incorporate any approved changes into the proposals.

### **HMICS**

- 2.7 All 23 recommendations from the HMICS *Thematic Inspection of the Scottish Police Authority Forensic Services* published in June 2017 have now been formally closed by HMICS. The final three recommendations were reviewed and closed by HMICS since the last SPA Forensic Services Committee meeting.
- 2.8 It is noted from the publication of the HMICS Scrutiny plan 2022 – 2025 published on the 12<sup>th</sup> April 2022 that a thematic inspection of Forensic Services is planned in 2023 which will “*seek to examine the effectiveness of the new strategy and provide assurance around how forensic services are delivered across Scotland.*”

### **Project Weaver**

- 2.9 Members of the Senior Management Team have attended the first of a series of engagement sessions for the University of Glasgow Post Mortem Toxicology staff who will transfer to Forensic Services later in the year. Organised by the Forensic Services Leadership Development Programme Lead, these series of engagement sessions will support the university staff through this transition.
- 2.10 Several of these university staff members will be seconded to Forensic Services for short periods to assist in the set-up of the new laboratory and instrumentation. Forensic Services are grateful for this support from the University of Glasgow and COPFS and we continue to engage closely with them to manage this transition while staff continue work to fulfil the existing contract.

### **Forensic Medical Services Act**

- 2.11 Members of Forensic Services staff played an important role supporting the delivery of the Forensic Medical Services (Victims of Sexual Offences) (Scotland) Act 2021 (FMS Act) which came into

force on 1 April 2022. During the past five years Forensic Services staff helped create supporting documentation and consulted to determine the retention period and samples/items to be taken during a Forensic Medical Examination (FME).

- 2.12 This Act places a statutory duty on health boards to provide forensic medical services for victims of sexual offences. The Act also establishes a legal framework for consistent access to "self-referral" where a victim can access healthcare and request a FME without first having to make a report to the police. As part of a person-centred approach, individuals will be able to request the sex of the examiner involved in their care and shows how much services are improving for victims of rape and sexual assault.

### **Spiking**

- 2.13 Forensic Services continues to work very closely with representatives from Police Scotland and COPFS in relation to the response on spiking.
- 2.14 All spiking toxicology requests submitted are treated as a priority by Forensic Services and they are dealt with as soon as they are received but these can be complex and - depending on what and how many drugs are required to be analysed - can take up several months to complete.

### **Forensic Strategy**

- 2.15 The first Forensic Services Leadership Day in 2022 will be held this week with members of the Senior Management Team, Operations Managers and Team Managers meeting in Stirling. It will be the first time we have been able to all come together in more than two years and our leaders will plan how we can deliver and embed the Forensic Strategy in all our work.

### **Demonstrating Value**

- 2.16 We have now launched a working group to seek a suitable methodology to assess the value of the work carried out by Forensic Services SPA brings to the public sector. The first meeting will review a draft Terms of Reference, membership of the working group, and how best to take this project forward.

## **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 There are no financial implications in this report.

**4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no personnel implications associated with this paper.

**5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no legal implications associated with this paper.

**6. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no reputational implications associated with this paper.

**7. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no social implications associated with this paper.

**8. COMMUNITY IMPACT**

8.1 There are no community implications associated with this paper.

**9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no equality implications associated with this paper.

**10. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are no environmental implications associated with this paper.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Members are requested to note the information contained within this report.