



Forensic Services Committee

1 February 2023

Minutes of the Forensic Services Committee held on 14 December 2022
via MS Teams

Board Members present:	Paul Edie (Committee Chair) Jane Ryder (Committee Member) Caroline Stuart (Committee Member) Fiona McQueen (Committee Member) Katharina Kasper (Committee Member)
Board Member apologies:	
In attendance:	<u>SPA Forensic Services</u> Fiona Douglas, Director of Forensic Services Vicki Morton, Chief Operating Officer Gary Holcroft, Scientific Head of Function Alastair Patience, Head of Function Helen Haworth, Head of Function Derek Scrimger, Head of Function <u>HMICS</u> Brian Jackson <u>Crown Office</u> Ruth McQuaid <u>Scottish Government</u> Elaine Galbraith <u>Police Scotland</u> DCS Raymond Brown CS Conrad Trickett <u>SPA</u> Amanda Coulthard, Head of Strategy and Performance Eleanor Gaw, Governance and External Relations Lead Colette Craig, Governance Support Officer



1. Introductions and Welcome:

1.1 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair noted this additional committee meeting was to allow the committee to focus on strategic issues and allow more focus on quarterly reporting at the next committee.

1.2 Apologies

DCC Malcolm Graham

1.3 Declarations of Interest and Connections

There were no declarations of interest or connections.

1.4 Decision on taking business in private (Item 7 – 10)

Members **AGREED** to take items 7 – 10 in private.

2. Minute and Actions from previous meeting:

2.1 Minute from meeting held on 24 October 2022 for approval

Members **AGREED** the Minute from the Forensic Services Committee on 24 October 2022 was an accurate record of the meeting.

2.2 Rolling Action Log and Matters Arising

Members noted and agreed the written updates provided.

There were no matters arising.

2.3 Decisions since last meeting

None

3. PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT

Vicki Morton (VMorton) reported on the developing framework. Next steps include staff and partner workshops to support its development, with the framework scheduled for report to Committee April 2023. The objective is to ensure that Forensic Services Strategic priorities link to measures, aligned with Scottish Government outcomes. During discussions the following was raised;

The Chair asked if there had been a review of relevant good practice in other organisations. VMorton advised that Amanda Coulthard (ACoulthard) and team at the SPA have assisted in this area. ACoulthard indicated that benchmarking is very much part of the model being used and officers are looking at other oversight bodies' practice and models. The Chair sought clarity on how wide the scope was for the Framework. VMorton advised that in terms of the strategy for Forensic Services there will be strategic outcomes and the objectives that align with them, time measures and benchmarking built in. Fiona Douglas (FDouglas) advised that underpinning the Performance Framework was a clear methodology to ensure that they are delivering against the Forensic Services Strategy. Each strategic objective will have core metrics, setting out performance expectations for each part of the service. ACoulthard added that the intention is to build a performance framework that has a hierarchy of reporting, and to avoid reporting so much performance and management information that it is difficult for the committee to identify the outcome delivery. Jane Ryder (JRyder) indicated that she would be keen for this piece of work to be related to the regulatory landscape.

Members **NOTED** the report.

4. DEMONSTRATING VALUE

FDouglas briefed members on recent meetings of the Forensic Science Value Steering Group, set up to look at how to assess the value and contribution of forensic science in the Scottish Justice Sector and to national outcomes (2nd meeting in Dec 2022). The group have had broad discussions on methodology and approach, and FDouglas reported a real willingness from all members to contribute to better understanding of the value of forensic science. Initially, the group will focus on one area (sexual crime) aligned with the strategic priority to reduce violence against women and girls. Partners include the Leverhulme Institute, which is keen to support this work with research posts. FDouglas and VMorton will be discussing the content of the research with Leverhulme Director Niamh Nic Daeid. The next meeting of the group is in February 2023. The whole research programme is expected to run for between 1 -2 years and provide more solid evidence of the overall value and contribution of forensic science.

FDouglas confirmed that Forensic Services Communications are involved in the working group, and will link in with SPA communications on this piece of work. A further update will come to the committee before the launch event, and a formal written report to committee 8th May 2023.

Members **NOTED** the verbal update.

5. Digital Forensics Next Steps, Accreditation and Timeline for Progression

JRyder welcomed the report and clear understanding of timeline and asked that in time there is a read across to how this fits within the whole regulatory landscape. JRyder sought clarity that when individuals are accredited did that mean they were credible by virtue of the training they have undergone, or was this in relation to individual pieces of equipment. CSCTrickett advised that the term 'credible' individuals would be better wording and this is based on them having honours degrees in computer forensics and having completed courses relevant to specific software being used. FDouglas indicated this relates to the competence of individuals being fully trained in the activities that they were undertaking. FDouglas added that the intention would be for accreditation to be provided externally, and ideally through UKAS eventually.

The Chair sought clarity on what would happen if accreditation was not provided in 2026. CSCTrickett advised that they will most likely learn on the journey where PS are falling down, and if there any issues it would likely be hub specific. If that is the case it is likely that certain hubs would not be accredited, however, those issues will be addressed as and if they appear.

Katharina Kasper (KKasper) sought clarity on to what degree an analysis had been made on what differences or degree of uplift will be required to have a consistent standard in all hubs. CSCTrickett advised that the discovery phase is ongoing and would hope to provide some visibility to that within future reports. By the end of the first phase (Aberdeen) they will have identified the current position and best practise national standard, to drive forward through the rest of the hubs.

The Chair sought clarity on whether this was the correct forum for this report. FDouglas advised that the review undertaken by previous member, Bob Hayes and current member Jane Ryder, recommended that digital forensics should be accredited. Further discussions highlighted the need for and value of this committee keeping oversight of the progress towards accreditation.

Members **NOTED** the report.

6. Forensic Toxicology Oversight Group – Update from Meeting Held 1st November and 5 December 2022

The Chair noted that following the delivery of Project Weaver on the 1st December 2022 along with substantial progress made with drug driving, it

has been agreed by SPA Board Members to stand down the Forensic Toxicology Oversight Group.

Fiona McQueen (FMcQueen) sought clarity on when members would receive more of a sense of the outcome on the Long Term Sustainable Model. FDouglas advised that given the new framework the report is being updated in terms of finances with regard to outsourcing. This will go to Scottish Government before Christmas. It is hoped that when the recommendations from the HMICS review come forward, the Scottish Government will be in a position to give more indication on the Long Term Sustainable Model.

FDouglas and members all paid tribute to the work and effort of the team in the successful delivery of Project Weaver.

