



**BUSINESS PLAN**

**2012 to 2017**

## Introduction

The regulator was appointed to provide independent advice on quality standards to the government and the criminal justice system in England and Wales. This involves, but is not limited to:

- identifying the requirement for new and improved quality standards in the provision of forensic science services and standards that apply to national forensic intelligence databases,
- leading on the development of new standards where necessary,
- providing advice and guidance to Ministers, CJS organisations and service providers to help them demonstrate compliance with common standards, for example, in procurement and in the courts, and
- ensuring that satisfactory arrangements exist to provide assurance and monitoring of the standards, including the management of complaints or referrals about standards of forensic science.

Although sponsored by the Home Office, the regulator is a public appointee and operates independently of the Home Office, on behalf of the criminal justice system as a whole. This independence allows the regulator to make unbiased recommendations and decisions.

The regulator is collaborating with the authorities in Scotland and Northern Ireland who have expressed their willingness to be partners in the setting of quality standards which will be adopted within their justice systems.

The regulator is supported by a team of 4 civil servants (which includes 3 scientists) with additional support provided by shared services from the Home Office and Home Office Science Secretariat.

## **Vision**

Forensic science delivered to the criminal justice systems in the UK must consistently meet the high quality standards and integrity expected by the police, prosecutors, courts and the general public. The search for and recovery of evidence has reached levels of analytical sophistication and capability such that all parts of the process (crime scene investigations, examinations of victims and suspects, and laboratory activities) must be reliable. Poor quality activities at any stage of the process will lead to the destruction, contamination or failure to recover or reliably analyse traces of valuable evidence, in turn leading to failed investigations, prosecutions and even miscarriages of justice.

In order to develop and maintain high standards the regulator will:

- provide direction and unity of approach to achieving forensic science quality standards across the UK,
- place quality at the centre of all forensic science activities,
- create a quality standards framework, based on his codes of practice, around the full range of forensic processes,
- use the Forensic Science Advisory Council as a source of independent and authoritative advice,
- maintain the use domain experts as the vehicle to deliver valid quality standards, and
- engage with the full range of stakeholders in order to consult widely.

## **Resources for 2012 / 2013**

The following resources have been allocated to the regulator by the Home Office:

### **Budget**

Admin (staff pay, travel, accommodation etc) £466,000

Programme (developing standards and forensic pathology audits) £430,000

Total £896,000

### **Staff**

Regulator 1

Grade 7 2

SEO 1

EO 1

Total 5

Plus corporate shared services

## Aims:

- By the end of March 2017 all aspects of forensic science<sup>1</sup> in the criminal justice system should be operating to a single quality standards framework based on the regulator's codes of practice and conduct.
- The regulator and other UK stakeholders will have been involved in the development of European and international standards for forensic science<sup>2</sup>.
- By March 2014 the government will have consulted on and decided on a statutory role for the regulator.

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<sup>1</sup> Covering equipment (consumables) used at all stages, crime scene investigations, medical examinations of victims and suspects, evidence recovery, analysis, interpreting of evidence, reporting of evidence and forensic pathology. This includes occasional experts brought in to assist (for example, forensic archaeologists) at any stage of the process.

<sup>2</sup> CEN/TC 419 - European project for forensic science standards.

## Priorities set for 2012 / 2013 (to be continued in subsequent years):

1. Quality standards.
1.1 Quality standards specialist group to oversee the development of standards.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pilot accreditation against the Codes of Practice and Conduct<sup>3</sup>.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Publish appendices drafted for inclusion in the Codes (DNA, digital forensics, video analysis, blood pattern analysis, entomology, firearms discharge residue, drugs and footwear).</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• As part of the Home Office review of the Custodian function of the National DNA Database™ review the standards applicable to the database.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop standards for the forensic services and the database for the National Ballistics Intelligence Service.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop appendices covering: analysis of bulk seizures of drugs, firearms, tool marks, road traffic alcohol, exhibit handling and storage, and crime scene investigations.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Advise volunteer groups producing standards and guidance (archaeology, anthropology, palynology, geophysics (ground radar) and toxicology).</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Publish guidance for forensic science expert witnesses.</li></ul>

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<sup>3</sup> Published in December 2011 and available on the Regulator's website and subject to testing and reviews.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish guidance on validation and use of casework material.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft guidance on cognitive effects.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Act as the project committee for the British Standards Institution (BSI) for the BSI role in European and international (ISO) standards projects.</li> </ul>
<p>1.2 Forensic pathology specialist group.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish the latest Code of Practice and Performance Standards for Forensic Pathologists.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish standards for forensic mortuaries.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish guidance on human tissue retention.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advise on the training of APT members.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake a forensic pathology audit.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advise on standards for non-forensic post mortem examinations and toxicology.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FSRU staff to liaise with the Royal College of Pathologists, the NPIA Pathology Delivery Board, police and the Chief Coroner.</li> </ul>
<p>1.3 Evidence evaluation specialist group.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and consult on an appendix to the Codes on the evaluation and presentation of science evidence.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research and present options for the regulation of forensic science expert witnesses.</li> </ul>
1.4 DNA specialist group.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publish the paper on a consensus approach to the interpretation of DNA profiles.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a DNA primer style document for the CJS.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advise the regulator on the implementation of the European standard set of DNA database loci with respect to quality.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore options for UKAS accreditation of DNA interpretation.</li> </ul>
1.5 Contamination specialist group.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an appendix covering the prevention of exhibit contamination.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and make recommendations on the use of elimination databases.</li> </ul>
1.6 Digital forensics specialist group.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an appendix covering voice analysis and comparison.</li> </ul>
1.7 Fingerprint specialist group.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an appendix for fingerprint comparison methods.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop standards for national fingerprint databases.</li> </ul>



1.8. End user specialist group.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To assess and advise on standards and guidance from the perspective of the CJS end user of forensic science (prosecution, defence and the courts).</li> </ul>
2. Manage complaints and referrals regarding quality standards according to the policy published in the Manual of Regulation.
3. Partake in projects to develop international (ISO) and European (CEN) forensic science standards.
4. Act as the UK single point of contact for the EU development of standards (Council of the European Union, Council Conclusions, 2011).
5. Provide advice regarding quality standards to the: National DNA Database Ethics Group, Home Office Forensic Policy Group, UKAS Technical Advisory Committee on Forensic Science, the ACPO FS21 Board, ACPO forensic science gold groups, the National DNA Database Strategy Board, the Home Office FSS Archives Group, ENFSI, EDNAP, meetings of the UK Association of Forensic Nurses, the Northern Ireland DNA Database Governance Board, Inter-Agency Drugs Advisory Group, NaBIS Technical Group, Human Tissue Authority, Histopathology Working Group, Royal College of Pathologists Forensic Pathology Sub-committee, Pathology Delivery Board, Streamlined Forensic Reporting Board, and the Planning Committee for the Forensic Science Society research and development conferences.
6. Provide advice to Ministers, the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice on forensic science issues.