

## FORENSIC SCIENCE ADVISORY COUNCIL

### Notes of the tenth meeting, held at 11am on Monday 7 September 2009 at the Home Office, 2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DF

Present:

Andy Rennison	Forensic Science Regulator (Chair)
Jane Beaumont	United Kingdom Accreditation Service
Stan Brown	Forensic Science Northern Ireland
Roger Coe-Salazar	Crown Prosecution Service
Kath Mashiter	Lancashire Police
Tom Nelson	Scottish Police Services Authority
Ann Priston	Forensic Science Society
Basil Purdue	British Association in Forensic Medicine
Brian Rankin	Forensic Science Society
Roger Robson	Forensic Access
Ewen Smith	Criminal Cases Review Commission for Julie Goulding
Sheila Willis	Association of Forensic Science Providers
Kenny Chigbo	Forensic Science Regulation Unit (Secretary)

Apologies:

Paul Crowther	ACPO
Julie Goulding	Criminal Cases Review Commission
Andrew Goymer	Judiciary
Ian Kelcey	Law Society
Mohammed Khamisa	Criminal Bar Association
Julie Mennell	UK Forensic Science Education Group

### Introduction

Andy Rennison welcomed those present to the tenth meeting of the Forensic Science Advisory Council (FSAC), especially those attending for the first time, Kath Mashiter, Ann Priston and Roger Robson. He agreed to write to Ian Kelcey and Mohammed Khamisa about their membership of the Council.

**Action: Andy Rennison**

### 1. Notes of the ninth meeting held on 1 June 2009

1.1 "Professional" should replace "clinical" in the second bullet of paragraph 4.2.

1.2 The fourth bullet in paragraph 4.2 should not read: The European Network of Forensic Institutes' code of conduct was suggested as a useful resource.

1.3 The last bullet in paragraph 4.2 should read: The word “lab” implies a lesser service than what is provided.

1.4 In the fourth bullet of paragraph 4.3 “discussion” should replace “approval”.

1.5 Paragraph 5.2 second bullet should read: not all forensic science is quantifiable.

1.6 FSAC members:

- agreed the note of the ninth meeting of the FSAC held on 1 June 2009.

## **2. Matters arising from the minutes of the ninth meeting**

2.1 Paragraph 2.2 (of the note of the 1 June 2009 meeting) – Andy Rennison reported that the ToR of the strategy group has now been drafted and will be circulated to the FSAC.

**Action: Kenny Chigbo**

2.2 The FSAC agreed that providers should be involved in the strategy group and Sheila Willis will write to Steven Webb about AFSP involvement.

**Action: Sheila Willis**

2.3 Paragraph 2.3 (of the note of the 1 June 2009 meeting) – Jane Beaumont has provided the list of assessors.

2.4 Paragraph 2.5 (of the note of the 1 June 2009 meeting) – Brian Rankin reported that Skills for Justice were producing a Q&A framework on forensic science for universities and this is being finalised. He will notify the FSAC when this is published.

**Action: Brian Rankin**

2.5 Paragraph 5.3 (of the note of the 1 June 2009 meeting) – Andy Rennison reported that the action following the workshop on the NAS report was to organise a desktop exercise to identify the risks to forensic science delivery in the UK and the scope of the risks. The FSAC suggested that the Regulator should investigate securing European funding for this exercise. It was also agreed that the notes from the workshop should be circulated.

**Action: Andy Rennison**

2.6 Andy Rennison informed the FSAC that two new Specialist Groups have been set up to look at contamination and evidence assessment. Stan Brown will chair the contamination group while Angela Gallop will chair the evidence assessment group. He agreed to share the list of members of the evidence assessment group with Brian Rankin.

**Action: Andy Rennison**

2.7 Paragraphs 6.1 and 7.3 (of the note of the 1 June 2009 meeting) are dealt with in later in the meeting.

### **3. Mandatory accreditation**

3.1 Andy Rennison introduced Paper FSAC/070909/44 stating that it sets out the current approach towards accreditation, deals with whether the Regulator should be on a statutory footing, and presents the different options for accreditation. Option 1 meant carrying on with accreditation being implemented through the procurement process, and then reassessing the effectiveness of this option. Option 2 involved a non-statutory requirement for accreditation to be delivered immediately. Option 3 was about statutory and mandatory accreditation. The Swedish initiative via the EU recommends mandatory and statutory accreditation for DNA and fingerprint labs.

3.2 It was noted that mandatory accreditation must be considered alongside the consequences of losing accreditation.

3.3 The FSAC commented on the paper as follows:

- Option 1 should not be open-ended. The objective should be stated clearly and timescales provided on when Option 2 would come into effect.
- Mandatory accreditation should be about developing a healthy quality management culture.
- Occasional experts could be accredited through their professional bodies, or they can enter contractual arrangements with accredited organisations.
- There should be a risk assessment of the model chosen.
- Mandatory accreditation would create a burden on providers and a sharing of this burden should be explored with a strong business case to the Home Office.
- The opposition parties should be consulted on these proposals.
- The scope does not include tracking the movement of exhibits.
- It is the organisation that will be accredited and not the processes.

3.4 The FSAC agreed that Option 1 should be redrafted as a paper that reflected the comments made.

**Action: Andy Rennison**

3.5 Andy Rennison will discuss the CPS's role as an accreditation gatekeeper with Roger Coe-Salazar and Karen Squibb-Williams.

**Action: Andy Rennison**

3.6 The FSAC agreed to send any further thoughts on mandatory accreditation to Andy Rennison.

**Action: All**

#### **4. Responses to consultation on practitioner accreditation**

4.1 Andy Rennison reported that the responses revealed concerns about how occupational standards will work, costs and benefits, and a general lack of understanding about those standards in forces. There is work to be done in terms of education on how it will work. Skills for Justice have been contracted to undergo this work. Their chief executive Alan Wood will be invited to the next FSAC meeting to speak on what they intend to deliver.

**Action: Andy Rennison**

4.2 Tom Nelson asked whether the comments from the SPSA were included in the published responses. The comments from the SPSA were on the consultation on quality standards. Sheila Willis also pointed out that the AFSP made a submission to the consultation on quality standards. Paper FSAC/070909/45 was a summary of the responses to the consultation on accreditation of practitioners.

#### **5. Draft annual report and review of Specialist Groups**

5.1 Andy Rennison informed the FSAC that he planned to submit the report to Ministers before publishing it later this month.

5.2 FSAC members commented on the annual report as follows:

- To redraft the paragraph in page 9 referring to meetings with UKAS and four years to deliver a full standards framework in light of the discussions on mandatory accreditation.
- It should be mentioned that the Practitioner Standards Specialist Group was standing down as its work has now been completed.
- The report should include a description of the future with business benefits realised.
- The risks should be outlined in the foreword.

5.3 The FSAC agreed to send any further thoughts on the annual report to Andy Rennison.

**Action: All**

5.4 It was agreed that inviting the chairs of the Specialist Groups to FSAC meetings was a useful mechanism for keeping the FSAC updated on activities of the groups. Andy Rennison agreed to invite the chairs to the December FSAC meeting.

**Action: Andy Rennison**

## **6. Caddy recommendations – current position**

6.1 The FSAC discussed progress against the Caddy recommendations.

6.2 The Regulator's response to Recommendation 18 on independent validation of new developments needed to be fleshed out.

**Action: Andy Rennison**

## **7. Any other business**

7.1 Brian Rankin informed the FSAC about the Forensic Science Society conference and AGM taking place on 30 October.

## **8. Dates of future meetings**

8.1 FSAC members:

- noted that the next meetings will be held on 1 December 2009, 1 March 2010, 7 June 2010 and 6 September 2010

Forensic Science Regulation Unit

2 Marsham Street

Sept 2009