

Forensic Science Advisory Council (FSAC)

**Minute of the meeting held on 28 February 2012
Home Office, 2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DF**

Present:

Andrew Rennison	Forensic Science Regulator (Chair)
Jane Beaumont	United Kingdom Accreditation Service
Roger Coe-Salazar	Crown Prosecution Service
Roger Derbyshire	Association of Forensic Service Providers
John Fletcher	Association of Chief Police Officers
Julie Goulding	Criminal Cases Review Commission
Andrew Goymer	Judiciary
Gary Holcroft	Scottish Police Services Authority
Albert Kirkwood	Forensic Service Northern Ireland
Kath Mashiter	Lancashire Constabulary
Ann Priston	Forensic Science Society
Basil Purdue	British Association in Forensic Medicine
Roger Robson	Forensic Access
Joanne Tierney	Scottish Police Services Authority
Alan Tribe	Metropolitan Police
Charles Welsh	Skills for Justice
Soheel Joosab	Forensic Science Regulation Unit (Secretary)

1. Welcome and apologies

1.1 Andrew Rennison welcomed those present to the meeting. Apologies were received from:

Stan Brown	FSNI (Albert Kirkwood attending)
Tom Nelson	Scottish Police Services Authority
Derek Winter	Coroners' Society of England and Wales

2. Minutes of the last meeting (1 November 2011)

2.1 Minutes of the last meeting were agreed as accurate.

3. Actions from the previous meeting and matters arising

3.1 All actions completed; none outstanding.

4. Legal Obligations draft paper (paper was for information only)

4.1 Mr Rennison introduced the paper advising that it had been produced to set out the legal requirements and obligations on forensic scientists and expert witnesses working within, and providing services to, the CJS. When finalised, the Legal Obligations paper will be an appendix to the Codes of Practice. The paper had been previously circulated to the End User Specialist Group (EUSG) for initial consideration.

4.2 Mr Rennison said that the EUSG agreed the document in principle. However, as the paper is an extremely detailed and lengthy one, it was recommended that an executive summary be produced for inclusion in the paper – a summary is currently under draft. FSAC members echoed the recommendation of the EUSG for an executive summary of three/four pages, and which (as the whole appendix would) be kept up to date by the Regulator's Office.

4.3 A number of Council members agreed, (as do their organisational colleagues who have had sight of the paper), that it will be an extremely useful 'toolkit' for setting out precedents and procedure rules for expert witnesses.

4.4 A number of members offered to circulate the paper to their colleagues for comment, i.e. the CCRC and Andre Goymer with the Criminal Sub-Council of the Council of Circuit Judges.

4.5 Mr Rennison said that, when produced, he would return to the Council with a draft executive summary for its consideration.

5. Presentation: Forensic evidence in the Stephen Lawrence murder trial

5.1 Mr Rennison introduced the item by saying that the investigation into the Stephen Lawrence murder raised a number of questions and details about forensic crime scene strategies and screening. Mr Tribe opened his presentation by providing the Council with a brief outline of the case.

5.2 Mr Tribe went on to cover the core aspects of the investigation, in particular the areas of searching for evidence (e.g. blood and fibres), interpretation of evidence (in court) and challenging the possible element of cross-contamination of evidence.

5.3 In summarising, Mr Tribe highlighted that there is a clear recognition that a number of questions should be contemplated when considering the perceived lack of forensic evidence from a crime scene. In particular, the need to ask tasking questions of forensic examiners around what evidence has been found and their associated hypothesis, and, given specific circumstances of a case, the forensic processes undertaken and possible contamination issues.

5.4 Mr Rennison thanked Mr Tribe for his presentation, and said that there

are a number of findings and lessons learned from the case that need to be considered as far as the future of forensic science standards are concerned.

6. Fingerprint Inquiry Scotland

6.1 Mr Rennison introduced Gary Holcroft and Joanne Tierney (from the SPSA) who had been invited to the meeting to talk through with the Council the findings, and recommendations, of the Fingerprint Inquiry Scotland.

6.2 Ms Tierney reported that the SPSA had accepted all the recommendations made by the Inquiry. She emphasised that the Inquiry recommendations should not be measured in isolation and should always be considered in context to the main body of the report, and not seen solely as a tick box exercise. Additionally, that fingerprint examination should not be considered as a distinct science, but that it underpins a number of scientific methodologies; and that opinion (i.e. subjective) evidence is not fact and therefore open to challenge.

6.3 The FSAC was advised that while the Inquiry was underway, the SPSA initiated six work streams to look at: note taking; scientific validation; verification of findings; human factors; fingerprint evidence; and quality accreditation.

6.4 In taking forward those work strands, the SPSA is working toward ISO17025 accreditation, and, accordingly, is liaising closely with the UKAS and the Forensic Science Regulator.

6.5 Mr Rennison echoed that he is indeed working with the SPSA and also the ACPO Gold Group (established to review the recommendations of the Inquiry and how these might be put into operation across police forces).

7. Fingerprint Quality Standards

7.1 Mr Rennison reported that following the publication of the Fingerprint Inquiry Scotland, his Forensic Quality Fingerprint Specialist Group is progressing well in the production of a fingerprint standard. As work progresses, the fingerprint group is working diligently with the ACPO Gold Group and the SPSA.

7.2 Mr Rennison referred Council members to the paper '*Developing a Quality Standard for Fingerprint Examination*¹', which is an initial framework fingerprint standard produced by the Regulator and the Fingerprint Specialist Group. He said that the draft framework will be shared with the ACPO Gold Group and the SPSA for initial consideration.

¹ <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/agencies-public-bodies/fsr/dev-quality-std-fingerprint-exam>

7.3 Additionally, as the framework progresses (with an aim to be an appendix within the Regulator's Codes of Practice), FSAC members considerations will be sought.

8 Accreditation Planning

8.1 The UKAS reported that it is about to complete and report on pilots of BS/EN ISO 17020 as a standard for crime scene investigations, after which organisations will be able to apply for accreditation against that standard.

8.2 Mr Rennison said that his work plan for 2012/13 will include work on standards for fire scene investigations.

8.3 Jane Beaumont advised that the UKASs services are increasingly under demand, given the deadlines of the EU Directive of November 2013 and November 2015 for DNA and fingerprint enhancement laboratories. There is now a need to assign priorities on what UKAS needs to focus on, i.e. the demands under the EU Directive, and the Regulator's Codes of Practice.

8.4 Although accreditation applications are being received, Ms Beaumont advised that that not all police forces have yet planned, or are in a position, to attain the accreditation requirements under the EU Directive; and, if not corrected, may find accreditation unattainable by the deadline set by the EU Directive.

8.5 DCC Fletcher said that, given the EU Directive, ACPO are setting in place an accreditation road map. Mr Rennison said that he would work closely with ACPO on this.

9 AOB

None

10 Date of next meeting

3 July 2012, 11:00a.m, Conference room 6, Home Office, 2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DF