



Message from the Regulator

Welcome to my newsletter in which I aim to bring you up to date with my work on forensic science quality standards and associated issues.

As I progress through my second term as the Regulator many people and organisations continue to collaborate with me and my team to develop a quality standards framework.

I appreciate that ever increasing financial pressures, the closure of the FSS and the wind down of NPIA have added extra challenges for us all. However, I am pleased to see that the commitment to quality standards remains high across this changing market as demonstrated by more police forces (and other organisations) achieving accreditation for the first time over the last year, with others extending their existing scopes of accreditation and many more working towards accreditation.

I outline here how I intend to support colleagues to deliver quality forensic science through various initiatives, and give a small insight into one of the more public complaints into quality failing I have dealt with recently.

Andrew Rennison

Regulator's Report

Regulator's Report on the DNA contamination case at LGC Forensics

On 23 October 2011 Mr Adam Scott was charged with an offence of rape by Greater Manchester Police and held in custody. The evidence was a partial DNA profile developed by LGC Forensics (LGC) at its Teddington laboratory and believed, at the

time, to be from one sample taken from the victim of the rape. This was later shown to be an error and the result of contamination during laboratory testing.

The Regulator investigated the matter to examine the events that led to the error and to determine what lessons could be learned. The Regulator's report sets out the findings of his investigation.

The Regulator's Report on DNA contamination case at LGC Forensics

Can be found at:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/agencies-public-bodies/fsr/dna-contam-report>

Codes of Practice and Conduct

Appendices

Draft appendices for DNA Analysis, Digital Forensics, Video Analysis, Blood Pattern Analysis, Drugs Identification, Entomology, Shoe Marks and Firearm Discharge Residue have been produced for the Regulator and the processes of developing these into standards are beginning. The progress of this work will be reported on the Regulator's website.

The contract to develop draft guidance on avoidance and detection of contamination and DNA elimination databases has been awarded with the aim to consult on this early next year.

The Regulator has posted invitations to tender for the production of the next set of draft appendices for Fingerprints, Tool marks, Fibres and Firearms.

The deadline for submission of any bids is Noon 8 October 2012.

Information on invitations to tender for Fingerprints, Tool marks, Fibres and Firearms.

Can be found at:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/science-research/about-home-office-science/working-for-us/>

Pilots

The Regulator published his Codes of Practice and Conduct in 2011 and is working with UKAS on pilots to extend accreditation for organisations currently accredited to BS/EN ISO 17025.

As part of that process, UKAS is to hold a 'collective' **pre-assessment event** for forensic providers interested in extending accreditation on **20 December 2012**.

An Expression of Interest notice will appear on the UKAS website in the next few weeks and UKAS will allocate places on a 'first-come-first-served' basis.

The purpose of the event is two-fold. In addition to UKAS explaining accreditation expectations for compliance with the Codes, opportunity will be given for provider comment on the requirements of the Codes which will be fed back to the Regulator for information/consideration for the 2013 version of the Codes.

Obligations of Expert Witnesses

It is essential that all those acting as expert witnesses within the Criminal Justice System are aware of the obligations pertaining to that role. The Regulator has therefore **developed a paper considering the various obligations**. This is now in the final stages of preparation and will be published on the Regulator's website in the near future:

Future Information on the Obligations of Expert Witnesses

will be posted on: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/agencies-public-bodies/fsr/>

Legal Issues in Forensic Pathology and Tissue Retention

In 2006 the Home Office **published guidance to forensic pathologists** covering the seizure, retention and disposal of human tissue and related matters. The Regulator's Forensic Pathology Specialist Group has overseen the review of this document. This is now in the final stages of preparation and will be published on the Regulator's website in the near future.

Crime Scene Examination

The Regulator sponsored the successful piloting of BS/EN ISO 17020 for crime scene examination earlier this year. UKAS granted the first accreditation for the examination of crime scenes to Orchid Cellmark Ltd, and is now accepting applications as part of routine business. In line with other applications of BS/EN ISO17020, UKAS have been consulting on an inspection recommendation and guidance publication for crime scene examination at the time of writing is now available from:

http://www.ukas.com/technical-information/publications-and-tech-articles/publications/Draft_Publications_for_Consultation.asp

Once finalised, RG 201 is expected to be available from: <http://www.ukas.com/technical-information/publications-and-tech-articles/publications/PubsForIBAccred.asp>

The Regulator will continue to evaluate options and timings for including crime scenes into his Codes, with the expectation of **phasing in adoption of BS/EN ISO 17020** over the coming years.

Publication of PAS 377 On Consumables for Forensic Use

We have developed and introduced a Publicly Available Specification (PAS) to help safeguard the integrity of consumables used in forensic science in the UK:-

“Specification for consumables used in the collection, preservation and processing of material for forensic analysis - Requirements for product, manufacturing and forensic kit assembly”.

In the German case of the "Phantom of Heilbronn", a female serial killer was hunted for fifteen years on the basis of matching DNA found at six murder scenes. The source of the DNA was ultimately found to be innocent contamination during the assembly of a medical item; medical items are sterile but may contain DNA. Less publicised, was that there had been at least a couple of similar cases in the UK. Important investigative resources were diverted before the issues were resolved, frustrating the investigations, delaying justice and, of course, costing far more than could be saved by the purchase of untested consumables.

The benefits of using PAS 377 to purchase kits and consumables include:-

- A common approach to consumables used across all forensic science evidence types
- Assisting purchasing decisions to support a competitive market
- Identifying ready to use quality consumables for evidence collection
- Increasing the potential probative value of evidence by reducing contamination
- Future proofing exhibits from the increasing sensitivity of future technology

Manufacturers and kit assemblers can be certified against the Publicly Available Specification (PAS) 377 by an accredited certification organisation, and, wherever appropriate that police forces specify such certification in their procurement exercises.

For the UK, those organisations already accredited to or seeking accreditation to BS EN ISO/IEC 17025:2005 'General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories' the existence of PAS377 is relevant to section 4.6.

Copies can be obtained through British Standards Online (BSOL) or the BSI Shop

Information on all British Standards

Can be found at:

<http://shop.bsigroup.com/en>

Future Consumable Standards

It is hoped to offer PAS 377 for development to a European standard (CEN) through an initiative from Poland to develop European standards for forensic science. The Regulator will attend a meeting in Warsaw 22-24 October to discuss the CEN proposal and the UK position on this initiative.

Standards Australia have submitted new work item to the ISO standard technical Board - ***Minimizing the risk of contamination in products used to collect and analyse biological material for forensic DNA purposes***, the work will be carried out in a project committee, the ballot by national standards bodies closed on 4 September 2012 and the UK voted in favour.

Conferences

Title: Forensic Science Regulator's Quality Managers' Conference

Theme: **Quality Standard for Fingerprint Examination**

5 St. Philips Place, Colmore Row, Birmingham, B3 2PW, 21 March 2013

(invitation only)

The last Quality Managers' Conference (March 2012, Birmingham) themed on "Building Relationships and Communication through Quality Management" attracted over one hundred delegates. The conference delegate feedback confirmed the conference successfully delivered "better understanding of forensic quality standards, as well as delivering networking and discussion/debate opportunities." As a result of this feedback for more regional themed based meetings this year's conference will concentrate on standards for Fingerprint examination and will be held on **21 March 2013**.

Provisional programme timings:

10 am Registration/networking for 11 am start - finishing 4 pm).

The Quality Managers' Conference will be by invitation only, therefore **please ensure we have the correct contact details for your Quality Manager.**

Title: Forensic Horizons: Promoting Awareness of Research & Development Internationally

University of Warwick, Conference Centre, **Friday 9 November 2012.**

A one day Research and Development conference has been organised by the Forensic Science Society following the recommendation to "establish better communications across the broad domain of forensic science research and development" through regular research and development conferences from the report: 'Research and Development in Forensic Science: a Review' conducted by Professor Bernard Silverman, Home Office Chief Scientific Adviser and supported by the Regulator.

The conference will explore the opportunities of collaborative research and development; consider the alignment of forensic science research and development

with the needs of the justice system, in particular the enhancement of public safety. Current gaps and how these might be filled to advance the application of forensic science will be identified.

Information about the Forensic Horizons Conference

Can be found at:

<http://www.forensic-science-society.org.uk/Events/2012/RandD%20Conference>

Online registration is now open at:

<http://www.forensic-science-society.org.uk/Events/2012/RandD%20Conference/Bookings>

Title: International Association of Bloodstain Pattern Analysts (IABPA) - European Conference

Edinburgh, Scotland, 12 – 14 November 2012

The IABPA's 4th European Conference is a three day international event and will cover case presentations, workshops, poster exhibition and research is being hosted by SPSA.

The conference organiser is Amanda Pirie (amanda.pirie@spsa.pnn.police.uk).

Information on the IABPA European Conference

Can be found at:

<http://www.iabpa.org/european-conference>

Editorial Notes

To assist with future communications could you please ensure we have the latest key person contact details for your organisation.

Comments are welcomed by the Forensic Science Regulation Unit:
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PLEASE DISTRIBUTE THIS NEWSLETTER TO COLLEAGUES

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