



Message from the Regulator

Welcome to our last newsletter for 2012 aimed at keeping you up to date with my work.

I would like to congratulate those who have achieved accreditation to ISO17025 for DNA search activities and fingerprint enhancement; with many of you are engaged with F21 and working hard towards achieving accreditation I look forward to hearing about further successful accreditations and extension to scopes in the coming year against the financial challenges we face.

This year has been a busy year for the unit and my specialist groups, a trend that will continue into the next year as we consult on a number of appendices and commission the production of further appendices to my codes

Best Wishes for the forthcoming festive season and a prosperous and happy new year.

Andrew Rennison

The interpretation of DNA evidence

A report on the interpretation of DNA evidence by Professor Peter Gill is published on the Regulator's website this month. It was prepared to advise him on the level of consensus in interpretation of DNA profiles and mixed profiles.

Available from:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/agencies-public-bodies/fsr/interpretation-of-dna-evidence?view=Standard&pubID=1141874>

In preparing this report, Professor Peter Gill, an eminent research and development scientist / author in the field for forensic DNA, consulted nationally and internationally with stakeholders. The work was supported by scientists from my team in the Home Office Forensic Science Regulation Unit and DNA Analysis Specialist Group. As the report had a number of recommendations, the DNA Analysis Specialist Group were further tasked to incorporate the principles into the DNA appendix which the Regulator is publishing for consultation at the same time see below.

Consultation on Appendices' to the Codes of Practice and Conduct

The Regulator set out his plan to produce a series of appendices on specific disciplines during the original consultation leading to the Codes of Practice and Conduct. The first three were written by the various specialist groups and sub-groups and are:

- Digital Forensic Services
- Digital Forensics: Video Analysis
- DNA Analysis

Various other documents and appendices' will be consulted on in the coming months as a result of various commissions. Instructions and forms for communicating specific issues regarding the drafts are included on the Regulator's consultation page.

Available from:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/about-us/consultations/forensic-science-regulator/>

Codes of Practice and Conduct

The Codes of Practice and Conduct were published a year ago and many organisations have been responding by modifying their operating practices to comply. The 'collective' pre-assessment event hosted by UKAS for forensic providers interested in extending their accreditation to cover the Codes took place on 20 December 2012.

Contact the Regulator if you wanted to attend but were unable to as the Regulator might consider sponsoring a second similar event in 2013.

To contact the Regulator, email:

FSREnquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Information document on legal obligations

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. It sets out an overview of the obligations placed on expert witnesses in the criminal justice system in England and Wales.

This document may also be useful for organizations conducting method development and validation as it could assist supplementing the intermediate user requirement with those of the end-user, the courts.

Available from:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/agencies-public-bodies/fsr/legal-issues-path-tissue-reten>

Information document on forensic pathology code of practice

The Home Office published guidance on legal issues surrounding tissue handling and forensic pathology in 2006. This guidance has been reviewed and updated and primarily sets out a framework for the co-operation between those involved in the investigation of violent or suspicious death to ensure compliance with the various legal requirements relevant to such enquiries.

Available from:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/agencies-public-bodies/fsr/legal-issues-path-tissue-retain>

Lisbon Treaty

On 15 October the Home Secretary announced in parliament that the government's current thinking is that "...we will opt out of all pre-Lisbon police and criminal justice measures and then negotiate with the Commission and other member states to opt back in to those individual measures which it is our national interest to rejoin".

This gives a very clear signal that the government will seek to opt out of some 130 police and criminal justice measures but with no indication of those for which it would then negotiate to opt back in.

Within these measures is the Council Framework Decision 2009/905/JHA of 30 November 2009 on accreditation of forensic providers carrying out laboratory activities which mandates the accreditation of DNA and fingerprint laboratories. The final decision on opt out does not have to be made until May 2014 during which time the issues will be voted on in both houses of parliament and consulted with the European Affairs, Home Affairs and Justice Select Committees as well as the European Scrutiny Committee and the European Union Committee.

The Regulator has discussed the announcement with Chief Constable Chris Simms (ACPO lead on Forensic science) and DCC John Fletcher (ACPO lead on forensic science quality standards) and all agree that it should make no difference to police plans to achieve accreditation for police in-house laboratories. The police commitment and plans to achieving the Regulator's required quality standards for laboratory activities remain unaffected by the announcement and any subsequent decisions by the government regarding opt out.

Science & Technology Committee hearing

The Science and Technology Commons Committee have announced their follow-up inquiry into the Forensic Science market following the closure of the Forensic Science Service. The Forensic Science Regulator has been invited to make a submission

The Terms of Reference and details for submitting evidence is available from:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/science-and-technology-committee/news/121122-fss-follow-up/>

The deadline for written submissions is noon on 10 January 2013

Conferences

Title: Forensic Science Regulator's Quality Managers' Conference

Theme: Quality Standard for Fingerprint comparison activities

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

(Invitation only)

The program planning and arrangements for the Quality Managers' Conference is well advanced; the conference will concentrate on standards for Fingerprint comparison and will be held on **21 March 2013**. Invitations to this event are being prepared and will be sent early in the New Year.

Title: Forensic Horizons 2103 – delivering R&D supporting best evidence for the justice system

Following the successful R&D one day taster event organised by the Forensic Science Society on the 9th November 2012, the society has announced that they will host the first biennial, three day R&D conference on **6-8 November 2013**, covering themes such as Crime Scene, Biometrics, DNA, Fingerprints, Human identity and a theme entitled "R&D I just wish....."

<http://www.forensic-science-society.org.uk/Events/2013/RD%202013>

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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