



## **NEWSLETTER No 15**

**20 November 2009**

Welcome to the fifteenth in our series of newsletters designed to keep stakeholders up to date with progress made by the Forensic Science Regulator.

Please feel free to distribute this to your colleagues.

### **Accreditation of laboratories**

I have been closely involved in advising and supporting the Home Office through recent negotiations at the EU Police Cooperation Working Group for mandatory accreditation to ISO 17025 for DNA and fingerprint laboratories. This stems from an initiative by Sweden, current holders of the EU presidency. They proposed that EU regulations should require all forensic science laboratories involved in DNA or fingerprint analysis to be accredited by their home accreditation body. The proposal received broad support from Member States with regard to DNA, but there were a number of issues to resolve for fingerprint analysis. These essentially boiled down to definitions of 'laboratory activities' that should be accredited as well as the legal basis for the regulations.

After much deliberation and discussion, a definition of fingerprint laboratory activities was agreed and tightened to include only the activities within fingerprint development laboratories. The original proposal would have captured all activities within police fingerprint bureaux which raised concerns from some Member States, including the UK.

The original legal basis for the initiative included EU Treaty Articles covering judicial cooperation and police cooperation. The judicial cooperation aspect was at risk of conflicting with the UK courts rights to admit or not to admit evidence. It seemed sensible to proceed only on the basis of police cooperation and this has been agreed.

The proposal was finally agreed at the last meeting of the Justice and Home Affairs Council held on 23 October. A full copy of the final version of the agreed document will be available on the Regulator's web site. Guidance will be available in due course on what now needs to be done in order to comply.

## **Forensic Science Regulator Practitioners' Conference: 9 February 2010**

I will be hosting a stakeholder conference on 9 February 2010 at the [Hilton Birmingham Metropole](#), National Exhibition Centre Birmingham (International) B40 1PP.

The event will provide an opportunity to talk about the progress of work towards establishing a quality standards framework for forensic science. The conference programme will be in two parts:

- Presentations from the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA), Association of Forensic Science Providers (AFSP), Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and the Director of Public Prosecutions will provide delegates with insights into strategic perspectives on quality standards in forensic science;
- Delegates will have the opportunity to attend workshops to further develop knowledge and understanding of the detailed impact different organisations will have on the standards framework. For example, the NPIA on their plans to support police forces seeking accreditation; Skills for Justice on the effective use of the National Occupational Standards and the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) on accreditation.

Full details will be circulated shortly, but if you would like to register an early interest please send an email to [FSRConference@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:FSRConference@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk)

### **Framework for procuring expertise for drafting the Forensic Science Regulator's quality standards**

The model I am developing involves the creation of a "core standard" setting out quality standards that apply across the various disciplines within forensic science. This core standard will be enhanced by annexes (or other documents) dealing with specific areas or science or procedure. These annexes will set out the manner in which the "core standards" apply in that area or provide more detailed consideration of requirements.

The number of annexes required depends on a number of factors but is expected to be greater than 50, which will be developed in a number of ways. In relation to those dealing with scientific issues I believe the most effective way to develop some of the annexes is to commission external organisations, with experience in the relevant fields, to prepare a draft suitable for consultation.

We will establish a framework for the provision of annexes, and other advice, which may then be used to allocate contracts for the provision of annexes. The procurement documentation for the framework is being finalised and will be published within the next few weeks.

Regards

Andrew Rennison

Many thanks for the feedback received on earlier Newsletters. Please feel free to contact the editor with any comments or suggestions for content. His email is [kenny.chigbo@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:kenny.chigbo@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk).

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