

Attendees

Apologies

Stephen Webb	Home Office CPG Finance and Strategy, Chair	[redacted]	Ministry of Justice ¹
[redacted]	Home Office CPG Finance/Forensic Policy	Chris Sims	ACPO
[redacted]	Home Office CPG Forensic Policy	Jon Stoddart	Senior User NE Region
Chris Hadkiss	Home Office Advisor	Chris Eyre	ACPO
Alan Pratt	Home Office Science	Karen Squibb-Williams	Crown Prosecution Service
[redacted]	Home Office, Police Transparency Unit	David Taylor	Home Office Commercial
Amanda Cooper	NDNA Strategy Board		
Diana Holl-Allen	Association of Police Authorities		
[redacted]	NPIA		
John Grealis	Attorney General's Office		
Andrew Rennison	Forensic Science Regulator		
Gary Pugh	MPS Forensic Services		

¹ MOJ have expressed a preference to only attend meetings when matters of particular interest arise, and have suggested that CCRC are represented independently. CCRC has confirmed an interest in membership of the Group

1. The Chair welcomed attendees to the first meeting of the newly-formed Forensic Policy Group, which succeeds the Forensic Transition Board.

Forensic Market

2. [REDACTED – COMMERCIALLY SENSITIVE]
3. The Regulator proposed a monthly performance meeting, where he could have some early insight into emerging issues and monitor trends, reporting to the Forensic Policy Group. The Group agreed that it was important that any report should separate performance issues from quality issues, although clearly there would be some areas of correlation between them. The Regulator should have primary focus on quality issues, but be sighted on performance indicators in order to be able to monitor where issues around performance may impact on quality.
4. The Regulator also mentioned issues in relation to UKAS confidentiality requirements. The effective and joint management of quality issues will require that information is shared between the NPIA (HO), the Regulator, the police and UKAS. UKAS will have to be freed from the confidentiality they currently have to maintain with each client, this can be achieved through the police contracts with the forensic service providers and by individual police forces signing confidentiality waivers.

ACTION – ACPO lead, Regulator's Office and NPIA to investigate options for quality and performance monitoring meetings and a referral mechanism for any issues to be escalated via the Regulator and FPG.

NFFA2 update

5. NPIA confirmed that the procurement process for the National Forensic Framework Agreement is proceeding as planned and will award in July. [REDACTED – COMMERCIALLY SENSITIVE].

Supplier Monitoring

6. The Group discussed the financial monitoring arrangements built in to the framework agreement and what further monitoring would be required. [REDACTED – COMMERCIALLY SENSITIVE] The group noted that Cabinet Office had undertaken work following a supplier failure issue in health and social care provision and that

Shareholder Executive were engaged in this. The Home Office agreed to consult with Shareholder Executive/Cabinet Office on the outcome of their work in this area to see if there were any processes that could be applied to the forensic science market.

ACTION – Home Office to follow up with Shareholder Executive/Cabinet Office on supplier financial monitoring.

7. [redacted] presented some discussion points on further monitoring. He agreed that, as discussed earlier, there was inconsistency in the flow of information given to the Regulator, which presented potential reputational risk should this delay an appropriate response. He went on to note that it would be more helpful if performance information could be predictive rather than historical. He believed that it should be a fairly easy task for suppliers to predict what their TRTs will be in the upcoming quarter and that this direct engagement with FSPs would also provide an opportunity for them to disclose any emerging issues. It would also be helpful to monitor elapsed days rather than the current “pass/fail” on TRTs. This would both help to ensure that delayed items are not simply set aside in favour of turning around in-date requests, and give a more balanced picture of the actual service level being achieved.
8. The Group should also be able to consider data on providers’ actual market share, including areas not included in NFFA contracts, such as digital forensics. The Group agreed that monitoring broader trends in both quality and performance may allow early warning of particular issues or difficulties with any particular supplier.
9. The group discussed the areas that were of significance for monitoring activities and agreed that they were:
 - Demand – the volume of business being submitted from contracting forces
 - Capacity – the ability for suppliers to meet demand
 - Market Value – the total market share held by each provider (including subcontractors). Data available during transition had been lacking so changes had been difficult for FTB to track.
 - Innovation – any emerging technologies that may affect that way FSPs work.
10. The Group agreed that close monitoring of FSPs was critical, but that work would need to be done to agree how best to gather and present relevant data. The Group

also briefly discussed the far wider issue of the background of FSPs major investors. The Group considered whether it was necessary to ask FSPs to disclose details of their significant investors in a similar way to provision in place for gaming companies. The Group agreed that there was significantly lower risk of reputational damage in this business area.

ACTION – Home Office and NFFA Central Management Team to produce data on market share value and consider new ways to report information.

Forensic Archive Working Group

11. [redacted] updated the Group on the outcomes from the most recent meeting of the Archive Working Group on 24 May. The archive is meeting TRTs for the most critical requests and broadly the archive's processes are bedding in, although some additional work is still required around communications. The FSS website is to be updated with Archive information. The Archive Working Group will continue to meet on a bi-monthly basis and report any significant issues to the Policy Group.

NPIA Transition

12. Following consideration of the available options transition of the various forensics-related areas of NPIA into the Home Office has now been broadly agreed. Work will be moved to the directorates as described in option 2 of the circulated options paper. This will see NDNAD, Pathology Services and Science and Strategy transfer to Home Office Science, Forensic Policy and Forensic Strategy move in to Crime and Policing Group and Forensic Marketplace move to Home Office Commercial. The Forensics 21 activities and team would primarily transfer to Home Office Science. However, where there is clear alignment between specific projects / individuals' activities and other groups of the Home Office, these individuals would transfer to those areas. It was agreed, however, that with the separation of the various work areas into their most fitting Home Office business area, it was vital that the FPG serve as a "golden thread" running through Home Office Science, Crime and Policing Group and Home Office Commercial to ensure that these functions continue to link up at the strategic level. It is important to clarify where responsibility for ongoing work will sit. Current structures place ACPO in a Senior Responsible Officer role for

the majority of work, but it may well be that the risk should transfer to the FPG for work which will sit within the Home Office.

13. The police service has, to an extent, been able to commission, direct and control resources within NPIA and clarification is needed on how the relationship between will function in the future
14. Clarification of the role of FPG in this landscape, including the ownership for major incidents, is required through a review of the Terms of Reference. This will then enable the Group to determine how responses will be co-ordinated for any Gold Group scenarios.

ACTION – Home Office to review FPG Terms of Reference and accountabilities

Supplier Engagement

15. The Group reviewed proposals for supplier engagement forums to take place through the Association of Forensic Service Providers, to feed providers issues, concerns and views into the Policy Group. The Group agreed that that this would be helpful to policy discussions. The first such forum is expected to take place in early September.

F21 – Current Projects

16. FPG agreed that ongoing NPIA Forensics 21 projects should be monitored by the group. Although a number of the projects are reaching their natural end, there are some strands which will continue in the medium to long term which will require continued oversight and that in addition, the team had an order book of potential projects for review. The Group agreed that the F21 project dashboard was a helpful tool in monitoring progress.

AOB

17. In November 2009 the EU Council agreed a Framework Decision requiring all DNA and fingerprint laboratories (whether they be government, commercial or police laboratories) to be accredited against the ISO/IEC 17025 standard by 2013 and 2015 respectively. The Regulator raised concerns that this decision has not yet been rolled into any formal legislation, although facilities providing criminal forensic

services in England and Wales are already expected to be accredited in this way. Simon Bramble agreed to follow up on this issue.

ACTION – NPIA to follow up on formalising accreditation requirements.

18. The Group received an update on some movement within the European Network of Forensic Science Institutes (ENFSI), including the relocation of the group's secretariat to Poland. The Regulator briefed the Minister on relevant issues within ENFSI around six months ago, but monitoring will continue on any issues which affect the UK and its representatives.

Scheduling

19. The Group agreed that dates should be settled for future meetings as soon as possible, with the next meeting to take place in mid-September following the Olympic period and after the first supplier forum.

[redacted], Home Office
30 May 2012