

Newsletter

Message from the Regulator

Welcome to my first newsletter as Forensic Science Regulator.

Firstly, I would like to thank Andrew Rennison for having established the Codes of Practice and effective regulation framework, on which we can continue to build. Thank you to everyone for the support I have received so far, and I hope I will be able to rely on the ongoing support of everyone involved in forensic science as we move forward.

I started the role on 17 November 2014 and it has been a very busy couple of months. My first priority is to meet as many stakeholders as I can, to understand the issues, risks and opportunities.

The product of these meetings will be a risk assessment for forensic science quality. This will form the basis on which the team and I will prioritise and set out a plan of work for 2015/16. This risk assessment will also be presented to the Minister, Lynne Featherstone MP.

Whilst recognising that both private and public sectors are facing significant financial pressures, it is my view that a clear regulation framework under which all suppliers of forensic services operate on an equal footing is essential to safeguard the provision of high quality forensic science to the criminal justice system.

Along with my team I wish you all the best for 2015.

Gill Tully

Forensic Science Regulator's Codes of Practice and Conduct (the Codes)

The 2014 edition of the [Codes of Practice and Conduct](#) for forensic science providers (the Codes) is now available. As well as detailing important requirements, such as validation, it sets out the target dates for the scopes of accreditation to include the Codes.

Validation Guidance

The use of valid methods is central to the accreditation requirements and the Codes. Validation involves demonstrating that a method used for any form of examination is fit for the specific purpose intended, i.e. that the results can be relied on.

Where a method has been validated in another organisation, there should be a documented review of existing validation studies and associated data against the user's requirement and specification to identify: (a) if the validation performed was fit for purpose; and (b) if further studies are required. Then the forensic unit is able to design a study to demonstrate that the unit is competent to perform the test/examination to the acceptance criteria identified in their validation/verification plan. The [validation guidance](#) is available with the Codes documents.

Public Comment Guidance

There have been a number of occasions where expert witnesses have made public comment about a case in which they have been involved. In some of these cases it appears that the expert acted with the best of intentions but that the result was questions being raised as to their integrity and conduct.

The [public comment guidance](#) has been issued to outline an approach to making comments. This should ensure that an expert can make comment or address concerns without endangering their reputation.

CPS Legal Guidance on Expert Evidence

This guidance, produced by the Crown Prosecution Service, provides prosecutors with practical guidance on issues relating to the selection, instruction and use of experts as they arise during the life of a case. It draws on existing and recently published requirements that prosecutors will have regard to when handling a case. All experts operating in the criminal justice system should be aware of this guidance. It is available at:

http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/assets/uploads/files/expert_evidence_first_edition_2014.pdf

Publications

Since the last newsletter (July 2014), the updated version of the Codes, a number of appendices to the Codes and several guidance documents have been published. These are as follows:

[Allele Frequency Databases and Reporting Guidance for the DNA-17 profiling](#)

[Codes of Practice and Conduct](#)

[Completing the 'History' Section of a Forensic](#)

[Pathologists Report](#)

[Digital Forensic Services](#)

[DNA Analysis](#)

[DNA Contamination Detection: The Management and Use of Staff Elimination DNA Databases](#)

[Legal Obligations](#)

[Provision of Human Tissue to the Defence](#)

[Public Comment Guidance](#)

[Time of Death Estimations Based on Heat Loss from the Body](#)

[Validation Guidance](#)

[Video Analysis](#)

Consultations

Blood Pattern Analysis

The consultation on the [bloodstain pattern analysis](#) draft appendix to the Codes closes on 27 February 2015.

Interested parties are invited to feedback to:

FSRConsultation4@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Anti-Contamination Guidance

The consultation on the control and avoidance of contamination in laboratory activities [FSR-G-208](#) and in crime scene examination [FSR-G-206](#) closes on 20 March 2015.

Please visit the [FSR Consultations](#) page where you will find our current consultations and response form.

Digital Forensic Methods

The consultation on digital forensics method validation generated strong views on all sides of the debate. The feedback is now being addressed by the Digital Forensics Specialist Group, which has representation from across the field, including practitioners from policing and private sectors. A number of comments that ISO 27037 would be a more appropriate standard than ISO 17025 were received. For clarity, ISO 27037 is a guidance document and *not* an accreditation standard. In conjunction with the UK Accreditation Service (UKAS), we plan to run workshops later this year to help organisations to prepare for accreditation in the digital forensics area.

Forensic Pathology

The United Kingdom and Ireland Association of Forensic Toxicologists (UKIAFT) has been asked to review the toxicology elements of the existing codes for forensic pathology.

Guidance has been prepared on sampling at post-mortem examinations. This has been provided to a number of forensic science providers for review. The UKIAFT has been asked whether a separate document dealing with sampling for toxicology would be of use. The Regulator agreed to provide independent oversight of the General Medical Council revalidation process for forensic pathologists on the Home Office Register. A process by which this shall occur has been agreed.

Conferences

The Forensic Science Regulator's Conference

The Regulator is finalising arrangements to hold a conference on 26 March 2015 at the Holiday Inn, Smallbrook Queensway, Birmingham, B5 4EW. This event will be by invitation only.

Presentations will include specific examples from organisations that have made significant progress in implementing quality systems, including practical learning points and benefits encountered.

Launch of Fingerprint Comparison Codes

The statement of requirements set out in the Codes has stipulated that fingerprint comparison activity is accredited to ISO 17025 by October 2018.

The Fingerprint Quality Standards Specialist Group (FQSSG) has finalised its appendix to the Codes, having taken into account feedback from the Forensic Science Advisory Council (FSAC) and the Quality Standards Specialist Group (QSSG).

The Regulator will in addition take into account any further feedback from the Scottish Police Authority (SPA) following its accreditation assessment, prior to the publication and launch of the appendix in March. The training of technical assessors by UKAS is now in progress.

The Regulator, together with the national policing lead for standards, the chair of the FQSSG and UKAS will make presentations at the launch event on 23 March 2015 at 5 St Philip's Place, Colmore Row, Birmingham, B3 2PW. This event will be by invitation only.

Conferences of Interest

There will be presentations by or on behalf of the Regulator at the following events.

St Mary's Centre 13th Annual Conference 2015

Thursday 26 and Friday 27 February 2015 at the Palace Hotel, Manchester, M60 7HA.

To find out more and reserve your place, please contact Charlotte Batra Charlotte.batra@cmft.nhs.uk telephone 0161 701 2322 or 0161 276 6515 / www.stmaryscentre.org

2015 Fingerprint Society Annual Conference

Friday 27 March 2015 at 13:00 to Sunday 29 March 2015 at 13:00 (GMT), College Court Conference Centre, Knighton Road, Leicester, LE2 3UF.

To find out more visit the Fingerprint Society's [2015 Conference](#) page.

DNA Conference and Body Fluids Forum 2015

Wednesday 29 and Thursday 30 April 2015 at The Jury's Inn Hotel, Birmingham, B1 2HQ,

To find out more contact Keshia McGuire at conference@csofs.org or visit the [Chartered Society of Forensic Sciences](#) website.

Editorial Notes

Comments, feedback and suggestions for topics are welcomed and should be sent to:

FSREnquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

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