



Forensic Science Regulator

Incident Examination Specialist Group (IESG)

Note of the meeting held on 14 December 2022 via video conference.

1. Welcome, and Introduction

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed all the members to the second meeting of the incident examination specialist group (IESG). A list of attendees by organisation is available at Annex A.
- 1.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed and would be published by the secretariat.
- 1.2 The Chair provided an update to the group regarding scene of crime working groups and technical forums which existed in the wider network, at the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) and the Association of Forensic Service Providers (AFSP), indicating to members of the IESG how the groups differ and may interact.

2. Update from the Office of the Forensic Science Regulator (OFSR)

- 2.1 The Forensic Science Regulator (FSR) noted to members of the IESG that the review of the comments made during the statutory consultation on the draft code of practice (henceforth 'the Code') would be completed by the end of December. The Code was expected to be laid in Parliament in late January, after which there would be a 6-month transition period after the Code was approved to the Code coming into force.

Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes

- 2.2 The FSR highlighted that there were over 100 respondents to the statutory consultation and resultantly there would be a number of changes to the Code. A response to the consultation would be published identifying these changes.
- 2.3 The FSR informed the group that one such change was to provide clarity on specialist activities which could be conducted to accreditation standard ISO 17025.
- 2.4 The FSR informed the group that fire and collision investigation would not be subject to the Code within the first issue, but it was expected they would be regulated in the future. The FSR noted they had been communicating with the relevant communities regarding this.
- 2.5 The FSR commented that there were certain areas which were not currently covered within the Code, such as explosions and covert activity. The FSR noted the IESG could share guidance on if/how these activities may be regulated in the future.

3. Major crime discussion

- 3.1 The IESG Chair introduced the agenda item by informing members that under section 9 of the [FSR Act 2021](#), the FSR was able to develop and formally issue guidance. The Chair noted that as a specialist group for the Regulator, the IESG were able to provide expert subject matter advice regarding what could be included within the guidance.
- 3.2 A discussion paper, developed by the Chair, was circulated to the IESG ahead of the meeting. This paper set out a proposal for the development of guidance in relation to examination of incident scenes, to support major and complex crime investigation. The Chair noted the paper was develop with input from individuals in various police services. The paper was largely focused on homicide.
- 3.3 The FSR informed the group that the intention was to develop an overall framework regarding the regulation of crime scene investigation. The FSR commented on the need to articulate the level of complexity in this area and the relationship with the senior investigating officer (SIO).

Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes

- 3.4 IESG members reflected that they found the paper useful as an overview with clear purpose and reflected on various conversations which had taken place.
- 3.5 The representative from the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) commented that it would be beneficial for the guidance to include examples of how to demonstrate quality assurance. It was noted however, that care should be taken for guidance not to be prescriptive.
- 3.6 The representative from UKAS noted that the use of language and terminology is of importance, reflecting the on the use of the term 'interpretation'. The representative from UKAS also commented on the reference to external documentation within the guidance as beneficial.
- 3.7 The FSR recommended the IESG reach out to the covert working group at the National Crime Agency (NCA).
- 3.8 The group discussed and agreed that the paper should be focused on the accredited individual and to address unforeseen circumstances, this individual would hold the requirement to manage the impact.
- 3.9 A representative from the Forensic Capability Network (FCN) suggested guidance regarding acceptable levels of environmental monitoring could be included in the paper.

Action 1: Members of the IESG to send reflections, thoughts, and comments on the discussion paper, including how this may be developed into section 9 guidance, to representatives in the Office of the Forensic Science Regulator (OFSR).

- 3.10 In final reflections before leaving the meeting, the FSR commented that once developed the section 9 guidance on incident scene examinations should be shared with relevant stakeholders for consultation.
- 3.11 As part of the discussion paper, the Chair included a set of eight statements of considerations which should be taken into account when making the decision to proceed with an examination, and in what manner. The Chair asked the group to discuss the following: whether it was possible to assess competence of a

Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes

decision made under pressure in a complex major crime scene and whether the required competency could be confidently validated.

3.12 A representative from the Metropolitan Police Service suggested that descriptors of competence could be included.

3.13 The Chair noted that this process should be delineated from the decision making of practitioners within a laboratory.

3.14 The group discussed the definition of forensic strategy within the paper. The group discussed that forensic strategies are set by the SIO and would be out of scope but examination strategies, set by forensic practitioners, would be within scope.

4. Role of the IESG moving forward – future workplan and subgroups

4.1 To develop guidance for specific subject areas, development of specific subgroups of the IESG had been discussed.

4.2 The representative from the OFSR commented they had been working closely with subject matter experts working in both fire and collision investigation who would be interested in co-option to a subgroup of the IESG to support the drafting of guidance.

4.3 It was noted that a member of the IESG should be represented on each subgroup to feed into the quarterly meetings of the IESG.

4.4 The IESG discussed the subject areas which specific subgroups should be developed for. The group discussed and agreed that there would be significant overlap between volume and major crime and any guidance developed for major crime would utilise principles that could also apply to volume crime. It was agreed to develop subgroups for the following:

- Counter Terrorism and Explosions
- Covert
- Major Crime
- Fire

Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes

- Collision

4.5 It was agreed that the approach would be for the subgroup to support the development of guidance. Any outputs of the subgroup would then be fed back to the IESG for comment.

Action 2: Members of the IESG are to provide feedback to the representative from the OFSR regarding the workplan and to express any interest in the identified subgroup areas.

4.6 The group discussed and agreed that an escalation process regarding who should report issues to the IESG should be agreed, alongside agreement of the threshold to report a matter to the IESG.

Action 3: The IESG Terms of Reference are to be reviewed to outline the extent/remit of the group.

5. Any other business

5.1 It was agreed quarterly meetings of the IESG remain appropriate. The next meeting date was scheduled.

5.2 There were no other matters raised.

Annex A

Representatives present:

Chair

Metropolitan Police Service

Association of Forensic Service Providers (ASFP)

Forensic Capability Network (FCN)

Greater Manchester Police

Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire Police

Scottish Police Authority – Forensic Services

Thames Valley Police

United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS)

Office of the Forensic Science Regulator

Home Office (secretariat)

Apologies received from:

Forensic Access

National Crime Agency