



# Forensic Capability Network

Shaping forensics, together.

## Quarterly Report April-June 2024

Welcome to FCN's first quarterly report of the 2024/25 year, here to keep our stakeholders updated on progress against our annual delivery plan. You'll find highlights of key activities we've completed in the previous quarter, but not an exhaustive list. Please share the document with your colleagues, and send questions to [fcn@dorset.pnn.police.uk](mailto:fcn@dorset.pnn.police.uk) — and thank you for reading.

### 1. Quality & Compliance

The FCN's quality team has had a busy start to the 2024/25 year. The team conducted a Supplier Assurance Visit with a representative from BlueLight Commercial at SceneSafe. SceneSafe is the national provider of policing's forensic consumables, and this recent visit was extremely beneficial with the FCN and SceneSafe agreeing to work together on several projects to further increase confidence in the forensic consumables they supply.

We hosted the first in-person National Quality Manager's meeting since the pandemic with approximately 25 Quality Managers meeting at the College of Policing in Ryton. This meeting, held quarterly, promotes the sharing of information and solutions across policing and provides a vital escalation point for Quality Managers.

The team has been working hard to identify further opportunities to meet regulatory compliance in a more efficient way, including the ongoing challenge of validating forensic processes locally. Those central collaborative validation exercises already underway across policing have now been collated to help support their progress and uptake. The next step will be to publish the roadmap and develop further opportunities to demonstrate how these challenges can be met in a more effective way, including supporting policing to meet the proposed regulatory changes in Incident Examination. We have also published a guidance document on validating IDENT 1 to support forces working to improve their compliance with the FSR Code.

We continue to proudly publish *Quality Matters* fortnightly and support police forensic units through our Compliance Support Teams; this period was no different as the teams travelled the country undertaking eight separate on-site visits.



### 2. Performance

**FCN is the custodian of a forensics performance framework, including data collection, baselining, analysis and reporting.** In Q1, we shared CSI benchmarking reports with all forces which submitted data

during 2023/24. We finalised a new forensic data collection set for residential burglary, which was sent to all forces.

We also drafted a digital forensic performance framework guide, and defined the DF KPIs which were agreed at the NPCC DF Portfolio Board.

## 3. Digital Forensics

In Q1, we concluded a 12-month research project with Warwick University into [the ability of natural language processing to help speed up VAWG investigations](#) (right).

Working with the Deepfake Generative AI Group on behalf of NPCC AI Portfolio Lead T/CC Murray, we continued to monitor any criminal justice impact from AI and deepfakes, informing the risk assessment for forensic science alongside the ICO.

We also helped develop the suite of DF KPIs to assist with the performance framework (page 1).

### Supporting DF Validation

We refreshed computer ground truth data (GTD) which was distributed at the end of July 2024, with validation document updates due soon after. Following plans for a 'proof of concept' tool developer validation, we received 3 expressions of interest to participate via the vendor working group. The DF validation groups continue to operate very effectively, now attracting over 60 participants nationally.



### Supporting Cell-site Analysis

The cell-site analysis collaborative learning exercise (CLE) was completed, a draft report compiled for distribution in Q2 after peer review, and a CLE workshop held. We continue to support the radio frequency community, and plan for further CLEs.

## 4. Supply Chain & Marketplace

### FCN supports across the whole of the sector in relation to the forensic marketplace, specifications, standardisation, regulatory and legal requirements

In Q1, we continued with forensic marketplace contingency planning on behalf of the NPCC Forensic Marketplace Portfolio, with master documentation to be updated in due course.

Findings from the Forensic Marketplace Strategic Plan (FMSP) developed throughout 2023/24 have now been reported into various key groups. We continued to re-

fresh physical and digital forensic data across the supply chain, providing it as required to NPCC, forces, partners and Home Office to aid decision making and risk management.

Engagements and visits with suppliers and customers continued taking place, as well as with vetting in Warwickshire regarding the potential to access overseas resources in the instance of any UK shortages. We coordinated the NPCC Vendor Group in June 2024 which received very good feedback, and also collaborated further with the Association of Digital Forensic Service Providers (ADFSP) to discuss enhanced ways of working.

## 5. Workforce

In terms of wellbeing, we completed the [wearables project](#) and published our final report both with the [OPCSA](#) who funded the project through STAR funding and with Leicestershire Police who were our partners in this project. The results to this have been shared with [Oscar Kilo](#) and with other stakeholders who are completing similar research in order to identify the best ways to protect the wellbeing of our practitioners.

We also published the [Wellbeing toolkit](#) which we have shared with the community and is available not only on the FCN website but also through the OK website.

### Training & Apprenticeships

We provided forensic community leaders with a list of training providers who currently offer forensic training in England and Wales, including physical and digital training with links to websites where available.

The level 4 digital forensic technician apprenticeship was launched with the first cohort starting in Q2. We established a mentor group for the pilot forces and have provided guidance on our website to assist.



## 6. Threat & Risk

**FCN helps give greater visibility and understanding of key strategic threats, risks and opportunities in forensics.**

In Q1, an updated status assessment was circulated to forces as part of the national forensic strategic threat and risk assessment (ForSTRA).



### Y-STR Database

Our sampling programme continued through the [Swab Out Crime](#) campaign, with an extended reach through a new option for men to [order a free home sampling kit](#) via post, and access to academic institutions.

### SFR

In Q1, FCN's quarterly SFR board meeting took place, and we launched a [new learning video](#) (*left*) providing an overview of what SFR is.

### Research

In Q1, we agreed a funding pipeline with the police Chief Scientific Adviser and reported on completed STAR-funded projects. We also liaised with forensic suppliers on potential joint research projects, secured funding for further NLP research, and began early planning for research into nitazenes.

## 7. NPCC Support

**FCN provides operational and tactical support to the NPCC's forensic portfolio and sub-portfolio leads.**

In Q1, we provided administrative and organisational support as needed for the Forensic Portfolio Board, Marketplace Strategy board, Quality Board, and others.

We also helped input to the NPCC Crime Committee meetings, objective setting, business planning and strategy setting.

In Q1, advice guidance and information circulated by the FCN on behalf of NPCC included the wellbeing



toolkit (see page 3), NLP research report (see page 2), Level 4 DF apprenticeship guide and workplace mentor guide.

Within our objective to build stronger partnership working across the forensic portfolio with criminal justice partners, we continued producing a monthly CPS newsletter to highlight key supply chain information about forensic services.

# Shaping forensics, together

At the FCN, we believe by bringing together the forensic and policing communities with key stakeholders, we can help shape forensics and deliver better outcomes for the public and victims of crime.

### **We deliver**

We have a well-earned reputation for delivering effective and efficient activities which support forensics, on time and on budget.

### **We're here to help**

People in forensics rely on us to help solve their problems and capitalise on their opportunities, so everything we do stems from our stakeholders' needs.

### **We bring people together**

We share knowledge across boundaries and run inclusive national groups to bridge the gaps in forensics.

### **We're a single point of contact for forensics in policing**

We're a national forensic body funded and governed by the NPCC, so our stakeholders know who to turn to.

### **We take a national view**

We lead on national forensic activities which save time and money for policing by doing things once instead of many times, where it makes sense to do so.



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