

**A Review of Scientific Support
Services in the Police Service
of Northern Ireland**

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Criminal Justice Inspection
Northern Ireland
A better justice system for all



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List of Abbreviations

ACC	Assistant Chief Constable
ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
CC	Chief Constable
CJINI	Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland
CJS	Criminal Justice System
CRFP	The Council for the Registration of Forensic Practitioners
CSI	Crime Scene Investigators (PSNI)
CSM	Crime Scene Manager
DCU	District Command Unit
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid
DPP	District Policing Partnership
FLO	Family Liaison Officer
FMO	Forensic Medical Officers
FSNI	Forensic Science Northern Ireland
FSS	The Forensic Science Service
HMIC	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
ICIS	Integrated Crime Information System
NDPB	Non Departmental Public Body
NI	Northern Ireland
NIM	National Intelligence Model
NIO	Northern Ireland Office
ODPP	Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SOCO	Scenes of Crime Officer
SPD	State Pathologist's Department
UKAS	United Kingdom Accreditation Service

Joint Foreword

1. The subject of this inspection was to review the provision of scientific support services in the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). It was the first joint inspection conducted by Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC).
2. The key aims of the inspection were to:
 - Review the leadership, structure and organisation of scientific support services in PSNI;
 - Examine people, equality and human resources issues;
 - Evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of how scientific support services is delivered in PSNI;
 - Consider the effectiveness of partnership between PSNI and FSNI and with other criminal justice agencies and customers; and
 - Report on progress against recommendations of recent HMIC reports, which looked at scientific support services.
3. The inspection of scientific support services was conducted in parallel with a CJINI inspection of Forensic Science Northern Ireland (FSNI). There is extensive cross references to the FSNI report and a number of interlocking recommendations have been made.
4. The report makes some significant proposals for the strengthening and development of scientific support services within the PSNI and to the provision of an improved forensic science service to the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland. We hope it will be of value in informing and re-assuring the public about the good work that is being done on their behalf, and helpful to PSNI who are involved in this challenging area of work.
5. Like all inspections, this was a snapshot at a particular point in time. We are conscious that much work to address the issues raised in the report has been undertaken, which is reflected in the Action Plan in response to this report.
6. The Inspection Team led by James Corrigan of CJI and Dave Kendall of HMIC appreciated the generous level of cooperation received from PSNI.

Kit Chivers

Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland

Ken Williams

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Executive Summary

1. Recent years has seen an increasing reliance on forensic science in the investigation of crime. A Scientific Support Branch within PSNI provides a valuable and necessary contribution to these investigations. Demand for more specialised forensic science expertise is almost exclusively met from Forensic Science Northern Ireland (FSNI). The market for the provision of forensic science services is changing in response to changes in demand (e.g. increased need for specialised services such as DNA and electronic analysis) and supply (e.g. more commercial forensic science providers and improved scientific support units within the police). FSNI is currently in the process of implementing a modernisation programme, which is intended to deliver a more commercial focus to the organisation, albeit retaining the status of a Government Agency.
2. A Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) baseline assessment of PSNI in April 2004 found that the 'current arrangements for the provision of forensic services to support volume and major crime are not effective'. Following this and other HMIC reports, control of scientific support services has now moved from District Command Units (DCUs) to the more centralised Crime Operations Department, which is headed up by an Assistant Chief Constable and managed by a Scientific Support Manager (SSM). The new Scientific Support Branch includes Crime Scene Investigators (CSIs), Fingerprint Bureau, Photography, Mapping and the Submissions Unit. Most staff in this Branch are now civilians.
3. This inspection makes some positive findings. They include:
 - (i) The PSNI has highly dedicated staff working within this very specialist area of policing. Though they routinely work in extremely difficult situations their commitment to provide the best possible standard of service is readily apparent.
 - (ii) Forensic science expertise, both within PSNI and through external providers, is having an increasingly important input to the investigation of crime in Northern Ireland. A Scientific Support Strategy has been developed in support of the PSNI Policing Plan. This strategy sets out a range of targets to achieve a vision of 'a cohesive scientific support branch, staffed by highly trained and motivated officers who are making a demonstrable contribution to policing in Northern Ireland'. Notable achievements to date include a much improved turnaround in DNA analysis;
 - (iii) A Volume Crime User Group has recently been established which aims to achieve a better balance in meeting the needs of serious and volume crime. Performance has improved in some key areas such as turnaround times for domestic burglary and vehicle crime and a new performance management system relating to CSIs and the Fingerprint Bureau has been introduced. This is already having a positive impact within the Fingerprint Bureau. Recent

advances in DNA retrieval and analysis has been utilised in a number of major investigations.

(iv) A much improved partnership between PSNI and FSNI is now evident, particularly in relation to projected forensic science demands within the PSNI. This is necessary for FSNI to plan future capacities including the building of a new laboratory. Inspectors are aware of significant developments since this fieldwork was conducted and is keen to see this reflected in the attached action plan.

4. Inspector's overall assessment is that the PSNI is providing a valuable forensic science service to the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland. The increasing importance of forensic science to the investigation of crime does require ongoing changes and improvements in a number of key areas. The major issues and recommendations of this report are:

(i) The very different pattern of crime in Northern Ireland over the past thirty five years has meant that the primary focus of a forensic science service has been on critical / serious incidents. As a result, volume crime such as domestic burglary had a much lower priority in terms of forensic science resources. As the number and proportion of critical incidents is declining and as the Policing Board and PSNI District Command Units (DCUs) place an increasing emphasis on volume crime, it is necessary to further enhance the status and capability of scientific support services within the PSNI. A recommendation to nominate a clear 'champion' for volume crime would be recognition of this development and would also provide momentum for change in areas such as the strengthening of the Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the Scientific Support Branch and the DCUs.

(ii) It is recommended that an urgent review should be carried out of all critical forensic science policies and that a comprehensive, **corporate** suite of policies is produced on the Service intranet site to ensure that procedures are up to date and that staff are fully aware of what is expected of them. Policy areas in need of greatest attention include the storage, retention, management, weeding and destruction of forensic science property and the role and authority of the Submissions Unit. It is also important that mechanisms are put in place to ensure that existing policies (e.g. on crime scene management) are understood and consistently applied.

(iii) The relationship with FSNI, as the principal provider of forensic science services to PSNI, is critical to the delivery of an effective and efficient forensic science service. Both this report and the CJI report on FSNI contain a detailed account of this relationship and a number of interlocking recommendations have been made. There is a need for more joint strategic planning on a range of issues leading to improvements in: crime scene attendance; coordination and management of functional areas such as fatal and serious vehicle traffic crashes and collisions; greater coordination in the use of fingerprints; the management and use of forensic science databases; the submissions process to FSNI; continuity of evidence and quality control; timeliness and tracking of cases; improved efficiency and value for money; and utilising FSNI expertise to raise

forensic awareness within PSNI. It is expected that the now improved 2005-06 SLA should include a mechanism to ensure adherence by both PSNI and FSNI.

(iv) Raising the status of scientific support services requires an investment in people. The view of many scientific support staff, particularly CSIs, is that more needs to be done to address low morale. The report recommends more effective communication between the SSM and staff within the Scientific Support Branch, specifically in relation to performance indicators. There is also a need to ensure that comprehensive training is available to all operational staff and that adequate measures are in place to achieve a return on this investment. Concerns around accommodation, measurement of performance and the provision of an out of hours service should be addressed by management.

5. Implementation of these recommendations will help to strengthen the internal scientific support capacity of PSNI as well as improve the overall delivery of a forensic science service to the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland.

Chapter 1 Leadership and Accountability

- 1.1 In November 2001, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) became the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). The service is divided into 2 geographical regions – urban and rural. Each of the regions is made up of smaller District Command Units (DCUs) of which 4 are in Belfast and 25 are aligned to the District Council boundaries outside Belfast. At the end of March 2004, the service employed 7,332 regular police officers, 1641 Full Time Reserve, 861 Part Time Reserve and 3,417 civilian support staff (1749 civilian direct recruits and 1668 NI Civil Service staff on secondment).
- 1.2 Forensic science expertise is known as Scientific Support Services, which includes crime scene investigation, fingerprint examinations, photography, mapping and control of submissions to forensic science providers. Advances in scientific techniques such as DNA retrieval and analysis and automated fingerprint recognition systems have opened up new avenues for crime investigation. The HMIC baseline assessment (April 2004) noted that ‘current arrangements for the provision of forensic services to support volume and major crime are not effective’. This, together with a separate HMIC report on homicide, provided for a re-structuring programme to be undertaken within PSNI. Control of scientific support services has moved from District Command Units (DCUs) to the more centralised Crime Operations Department, which is headed up by an Assistant Chief Constable. A Scientific Support Manager (SSM) has been appointed to manage the service as a separate branch and is assisted by a Detective Inspector. Crime Scene Investigators (CSIs), previously known as Scenes of Crime Officers (SOCOs), have been aligned to the SSM and are based at a number of regional locations. The transfer of responsibility for CSIs from DCUs to Crime Operations has resulted in a new responsibility for the SSM (see Chapter 5). Many of the scientific support services posts in PSNI are now provided by non police officers, including that of the SSM and CSIs.
- 1.3 The SSM has been in post for just over 3 years, having worked for a long period in Forensic Science Northern Ireland (FSNI). The SSM is responsible for the photographic department (including mapping), the fingerprint bureau and the submissions unit (staffed by two detective officers) which is co-located at FSNI. The SSM holds a budget for submissions to laboratories other than FSNI and manages this aspect of submissions as well as reviewing appeals arising from decisions taken by the submissions unit. The SSM has responsibility for recruitment, training and development of policy/guidance for CSIs. This role requires a direct involvement in strategic tasking and co-ordination at high level within the Service.
- 1.4 A range of officers and civilian staff stated that there is a need for the Service to achieve a better balance in meeting the needs of serious and volume crime. Serious crime is homicide, attempted murder, rape and armed robbery while volume crime includes domestic burglaries and vehicle crime. The unambiguous ‘champion’ for serious crime is the Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) for Crime Operations but it was felt by officers at DCU level that, unlike serious crime, the lines of accountability for volume crime are not clear. Officers felt that at DCU

level the support/command stopped at the most senior detective for volume crime and that this was not equitable with the arrangements for serious crime. Senior officers in PSNI acknowledged that serious crime has taken precedence over volume crime matters but state that a better balance is being sought. The allocation of forensic resources is based on the National Intelligence Model (NIM) assessment but it needs to be kept under review due to the changing pattern of crime in Northern Ireland. The PSNI has faced proportionally greater numbers of critical incidents than comparable forces in Great Britain, though this proportion has shown a decrease in recent years. A Volume Crime Users Group, chaired by another ACC, was established late last year to look at the best use of forensic science in relation to volume crime. Inspectors recommend that **the chief officer team of PSNI should review the portfolios around crime to ensure that there are clear lines of accountability and a clear 'champion' for volume crime.**

- 1.5 The establishment of 29 DCUs and District Policing Partnerships (DPPs) co-terminous with District Council boundaries, whilst providing for the development of local responses to meet local needs and having merit in terms of local accountability, is acknowledged by the Service as inhibiting its overall effectiveness and efficiency. Feedback from PSNI officers and also FSNI scientists suggested that the current structure inhibits the effective management of systems and processes at a very practical level. If the forensic science budget were to be devolved to DCU commanders then this would prove unwieldy with staff in 29 DCUs carrying out the same function. This would also result in FSNI issuing 29 separate sets of accounts. On the other hand, the centralised nature of the forensic science budget results in a lack of accountability by DCU commanders and provides little incentive to manage resources efficiently. It was also suggested that there is a conflict between DCU and Crime Operations priorities when it comes to determining spend on forensic science. It is therefore positive to note that at the time of inspection, PSNI was proposing to establish a notional devolved budget in three DCUs which would provide for improved DCU financial accountability and control over forensic submissions. A later recommendation (3.4) is aimed at building on any benefits which accrue from this pilot initiative.
- 1.6 Inspectors are of the view that the lack of constant and ongoing joint planning between the PSNI and FSNI, as its main provider of forensic science expertise, has weakened the delivery of a forensic science service in Northern Ireland. A Service Level Agreement (SLA) has been in place between PSNI and FSNI for a number of years, but both organisations would accept that it did not meet the needs of PSNI and the capacities of FSNI. For example, the increasing importance of DNA analysis for crime investigation was not reflected in the SLA until this year. A change in approach within PSNI for a more timely and best value service was not fully anticipated within FSNI resulting in a deteriorating relationship. Inspectors understand that joint planning between the leadership of both organisations is currently taking place and that agreement on some broad issues has been reached. This should provide a better corporate understanding of each organisation's needs and a basis for the provision of a more coordinated service over the coming years. It is recommended that **the chief officer team of PSNI should conduct regular and formalised**

strategic planning with senior management in FSNI which then feeds into a more co-ordinated delivery of the forensic science service and to an SLA which has mechanisms to ensure that it is adhered to by both organisations. More specific areas of joint planning are listed in Chapter 4.

- 1.7 Feedback from focus groups and meetings with a range of police officers and scientific support staff pointed to elements of poor leadership at a number of crime scenes. This was caused in particular by confusion on who has primacy for the management and coordination of forensic science. Crime scenes vary from murder sites to personal samples from individuals and encompass the locating, retrieval, packaging and submission of forensic exhibits for laboratory / fingerprint examination. There were differing views expressed to inspectors on who should have primacy for forensic science – a Senior Investigating Officer (SIO), the newly established Crime Scene Managers (CSM), the CSI, an experienced lead scientist from FSNI or, in some circumstances, an investigating officer from the Office of the Police Ombudsmans. This lack of clarity on primacy was found to be inhibiting effective co-ordination resulting in situations where, for example, a CSI, a photographer, a mapper and a FSNI scientist can be working in isolation and having to wait for considerable periods of time to gain access to the scene and complete their respective tasks. Inspectors are aware that PSNI have a set of policies on the management of crime scenes, but many of these policies relating to the management of forensic science are not readily understood by key staff and they are not applied consistently in practice. A later recommendation (2.13) addresses this issue.

Chapter 2 Policy and Strategy

- 2.1 A 'Scientific Support Strategy in support of the PSNI Policing Plan 2004-2007' has been developed. The vision of the strategy is one of 'a cohesive scientific support branch, staffed by highly trained and motivated officers who are making a demonstrable contribution to policing in Northern Ireland'. The document outlines ten targets to ensure that scientific support is provided with a clear direction and purpose, that a balance is maintained across a wide area of activities and that staff within the Branch can identify the important contributions which they make to policing in Northern Ireland. While the strategy is good in many areas, this chapter of the report concentrates on those areas which are in need of attention.
- 2.2 Views expressed by police officers, civilian scientific support staff and FSNI scientists point to a need for clarity and consistency on crime scene attendance. For example, CSIs reported that they attend some, but not all, incendiary device scenes and were unclear whether this was as a result of lack of awareness of policy or different decision-making by SIOs. Variations between DCUs were also found in the attendance of CSIs at volume crime scenes – in one DCU area, attendance at domestic burglary scenes was quoted as being as low as 30%. Examples were also cited of police supervisors overriding CSI advice resulting in staff attending scenes at which they were not required. When a number of different specialists are required to attend a crime scene, it was commented that lack of co-ordination was also impeding their effectiveness. Not only can staff find themselves waiting for lengthy periods in order to gain access (see para 1.7), but examples were given where the lack of forensic awareness by operational police officers had directly inhibited the work of the CSI. FSNI scientists also reported occasions where they duplicated the tasks carried out by CSIs.
- 2.3 An area which needs attention is policy on dealing with the scenes of fatal and serious vehicle crashes and collisions. A detailed investigation is necessary as fatal crash and collision scenes need to be treated in the same way as homicide investigations. This requires the closure of roads as evidence not collected at an early stage will be lost. However there is also a responsibility to ensure that roads are closed only for as long as necessary. Inspectors are aware of the costs to businesses and the economy when a major arterial route is closed. FSNI and PSNI need to jointly review their policies in relation to fatal and serious vehicle crashes and collisions so that a more effective and efficient service is delivered. Inspectors are of the view that it is not the best use of resources that the largest proportion of crime scene attendance by scientists is devoted to fatal and serious vehicle crashes and collisions. More of this expertise should be undertaken by the police, as in England and Wales, and this would also free up FSNI scientists to spend more time on desk work within the laboratory. It is recommended that **PSNI should set up a properly resourced unit for fatal and serious vehicle crashes and collisions, to reflect the service that currently exists in Great Britain i.e. a dedicated crash and collision investigation unit.** An urgent policy change is required in respect of these investigations to ensure that **a sufficient number of roads policing staff should be adequately trained in collision**

investigation, commensurate with training provided in England and Wales and which follows the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) manual of road death investigation. It is also essential that staff have access to the appropriate equipment and trained in its use. Policy should review the requirement to use forensic scientists at these scenes once sufficient roads policing staff are trained to the required standard. Interviews with Crash/Collision and Road Traffic investigators would suggest that no proper risk assessment is undertaken for their roles in testing road surfaces and damaged vehicles. This, too, needs to be addressed within policy.

- 2.4 Due to volume of work, a dedicated PSNI Submissions Unit is based at FSNi and is responsible for submitting forensic science property to the laboratory. The process for PSNI submissions entering and leaving the laboratory is covered in chapter 6. The policy on PSNI submissions is detailed in the SLA between PSNI and FSNi which states a certain number of items, categorised by type of forensic analysis required, can be submitted to the laboratory. To manage this process, the Submissions Unit is provided with a policy document which prioritises submissions on the basis of crime type – ‘live’ murder investigations receive top priority followed by terrorist offences and serious crime such as rape investigations and then volume crime such as burglaries and vehicle crime. It is evident to inspectors that the real level of demand for forensic services has not been accurately reflected within previous SLAs and that the priority system is resulting in tensions between serious and volume crime. As a result, evidence was found of some non-compliance with policy where some submissions are subject to barter, rather than in line with agreed thresholds or priorities, and some can bypass the Submissions Unit altogether, going directly to scientists. PSNI officers reported on a policy of only being allowed to submit a limited number of items for forensic examination in relation to burglary offences unless there were extenuating circumstances. It is recommended that **a much better resourced Submissions Unit should be put in place, which operates to a robust SLA and has a priority system which recognises the growing importance of volume crime.**
- 2.5 The issue of how policies and strategy are communicated to staff is critical to the delivery of an effective service. An important finding is that internal communication policy needs to be strengthened in terms of top down and bottom up processes. A common view among CSIs is that the flow of information has been poor and there is criticism of a lack of consultation in terms of policy development and improvements to service delivery. A recommendation to improve line management arrangements (see Chapter 5) should improve overall understanding of strategies and policies and address the perceived lack of consultation.
- 2.6 Discussions with police officers and scientific support staff in PSNI show a need for a more comprehensive approach and strategy to forensic science training for all operational officers but particularly for new student officers and newly promoted supervisors. Detective officers of all ranks and CSIs highlighted gaps in awareness in relation to protecting scenes for DNA, packaging of exhibits and continuity of evidence as particular issues. Training and awareness in relation to exhibit handling once recruits have left the police training school was found to

be very much dependant on local arrangements within individual DCUs. For example, at Lisburn, training staff are located near to the CSI base and regularly issue instruction on the handling and packaging of exhibits. It is considered that the current training provision to student officers is inadequate. The SLA allows for 210 hours of training to PSNI and provides for the supply of kits for the collection and packaging of approved materials. In order to raise the level of forensic awareness across the service, it is recommended that **PSNI in co-operation with FSNI, should develop and deliver a bespoke forensic science training package. Comprehensive training for all operational staff should be improved as a matter of priority.**

- 2.7 Maintaining the integrity and continuity of evidence from crime scene to court is critical to the successful investigation and prosecution of crime. Current policy on property in PSNI (property lost, found or otherwise coming into the possession of the police), however, is contained in a Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) document. The property policy document should be replaced as a matter of priority.
- 2.8 The collection of forensic property at crime scenes is the responsibility of the Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) working in close collaboration with a CSM, CSIs and specialist scientists from FSNI, when requested. Any property taken from a crime scene is packaged and labelled and then transported to PSNI stations or directly to FSNI. There is some concern that a lack of forensic awareness at some crime scenes may be compromising the integrity and preservation of evidence. Another example of poor forensic awareness is a tendency, particularly in less experienced officers, to collect everything for submission to the laboratory – a practice which in part relates to a lack of local budgetary accountability on the use of specialist forensic science services but also serves to reinforce overall lack of awareness both forensically and cost wise.
- 2.9 Inspectors visited a number of PSNI stations (CSI bases) across Northern Ireland and found varying practices concerning the storage of property. Some of the CSI offices were very untidy. Vehicle examination garages were generally found to be insecure, untidy and used to store other exhibits. A number of recovery agents are used by PSNI and some of the premises used by these agents were described by staff as unsuitable for purpose, particularly in relation to security and cleanliness. Staff also stated that they regularly attended garages to examine vehicles to find additional vehicles requiring examination of which they had not been made aware. Staff stated that there was no corporate policy in respect of property storage and the ‘ownership’ of forensic garages i.e. they are physically located within certain DCUs but are first and foremost a forensic facility and should therefore belong to the central Scientific Support Branch. Within the Special Property Registers, the ‘location of property’ section was often found to have been completed ‘with investigating officer’. It is recommended that the Service should urgently review its arrangements and procedures for the storage, retention and management of all property and that corporate policy, systems and procedures are formulated and implemented as a matter of priority.

- 2.10 There were examples where steps had been taken to improve the storage and retention of property, such as Omagh, Ballymena and Bangor. A particularly effective example was found in Antrim where a database had been created to track the movement of exhibits sent to the laboratory for examination and recording their movement thereafter. While praise must go to individual supervisors for these initiatives, they are not corporate, not linked to wider strategies and not subject to wider scrutiny and assessment.
- 2.11 A weeding and destruction policy is held by the SSM within PSNI but there is little evidence that it is adhered to. During visits to CSI bases, some stores were found to contain items dating as far back as 1996. Whilst these may still need to be retained, the person in charge of the store had no knowledge of whether it was required and tended to rely on personal knowledge of each case as to the value of the item. Staff stated that they would ask officers for an update on items if storage space was required for other items. Inspectors visiting a station in Belfast saw a number of vehicles in the yard that had been examined. Whilst some were still classed as exhibits, there were others where staff were unaware of the vehicle's status or how long it had been stored, though it was readily apparent that some had been 'in storage' for a long time.
- 2.12 At the time of the inspection, PSNI was undertaking an audit of all forensic property relating to unsolved homicides during the Troubles which has identified a large number of items and exhibits. It is planned to store this property, including property from all serious crime, in a new purpose built central storage facility. At present, however, no updated policy has been developed in relation to the storage of property from other categories of crime. The issue of safe storage is now to the forefront as new scientific analysis, in DNA for example, is allowing old cases to be re-opened and investigated.
- 2.13 It is recommended that **an urgent review should be carried out of all critical policies. This should result in the production of a suite of comprehensive corporate policies readily available via the Service intranet site, which ensures that procedures are up to date, staff are fully aware of what is expected of them and mechanism are in place to ensure compliance. The areas in need of immediate attention are:**
- **Greater awareness of, and compliance with, existing policies on the management and co-ordination of crime scenes including who has primacy for forensic science, attendance and roles of attending specialists**
 - **Fatal and serious vehicle crashes and collisions investigation**
 - **Role and authority of the Submissions Unit including clear guidance on submissions priorities**
 - **Forensic science training and awareness for all operational staff**
 - **Storage, retention and management of all property (including vehicles)**
 - **Weeding and destruction of property**

Chapter 3 Resources

- 3.1 FSNI is the primary provider of external forensic science expertise for the PSNI. PSNI is FSNI's principal client accounting for over 90% of annual revenue. The SLA between FSNI and PSNI sets out the range, quality and timeliness of all products and services to be delivered by FSNI to PSNI and the annual fee chargeable. The SLA also outlines agreed procedures for remedying non-performance by either FSNI or PSNI.
- 3.2 The forensic science budget allocated to FSNI has increased significantly in recent years from £6,590,000 in 2003/04 to £7,156,000 in 2004/05 and with £8,800,000 having been allocated for 2005/06. In addition, this year, a further £450,000 has been allocated for specialist work and £650,000 for work that has to be outsourced. Even this level of expenditure does not address the continuing level of demand which has increased dramatically over the past 3 years. The Service has responded by over submission (in relation to agreed thresholds in the SLA) to the laboratory, which has stretched the capacity of the laboratory to undertake the work and contributed to a slippage in performance, most notably in target timescales. This in turn has added to delays in the processing of cases through the criminal justice system. There is a need to move away from the current fixed spend or block payment to FSNI in favour of transparent charging as it inhibits a value for money approach within the Service and encourages over demand for FSNI services (e.g. little thought given to submissions). **The proposed introduction of hard charging for all products and services by FSNI provides an opportunity for PSNI to identify and develop policies and processes to achieve greater accountability in terms of submissions control and finances.** This will require joint planning with FSNI.
- 3.3 The Scientific Support Strategy in support of PSNI's Policing Plan 2004-2007 highlights the critical role of FSNI in providing timely, reliable and effective services if PSNI is to meet its investigative commitments. In terms of accountability, monitoring of scientific support to serious crime investigations has been provided for within the Scientific Support Strategy through the creation of a Serious Crime User Group comprising ACC Crime Operations and Heads of specific Branches. There are similar arrangements in relation to volume crime support through the establishment of a separate Volume Crime User Group comprising another ACC together with DCU and regional representatives. In the latter case, the service aim is to allow DCU Commanders sufficient flexibility to align resources to local policing needs whilst maintaining central control for the provision of forensic science services.
- 3.4 The whole of the forensic science budget is currently centrally controlled. At the time of the inspection the issue of devolvement / delegation was being actively examined by the Service. It is acknowledged that the current structure of 29 DCUs presents particular problems in this regard for PSNI. At present, however, there appears to be little incentive locally for effective prioritisation or a focus on value for money. At the time of the inspection it is understood that three pilot sites would be given notional budgets to allow a breakdown of spend at local level to be identified. It is essential that **the pilot sites for devolved**

forensic science budgets should be fully evaluated in light of the need to improve accountability for spend. It is also essential that the now-established Serious and Volume Crimes User Groups fully embrace their monitoring roles to ensure that non-performance issues under the SLA are actioned. This will require critical management information to be identified and provided to these groups in order that this function can be carried out effectively.

- 3.5 The management of CSIs now falls under the central operational control of the SSM. Whilst this provides the Service with an opportunity to develop a more corporate approach in terms of service delivery, it is also important that District Commanders are able to maintain an overview of performance, particularly where it impacts on the DCU's performance in relation to serious and volume crime. For example, a common theme throughout the inspection was the fact that, as a result of re-structuring, the location of some CSI bases was impeding efficiency, especially in rural areas where travelling time is a particular consideration. There was evidence during interviews of travelling time not only adversely impacting on CSI availability but also influencing decisions on whether or not to request CSI attendance at some crime scenes.
- 3.6 The issue of the standard of accommodation provided for CSIs which is acknowledged by the Service in its Scientific Support Strategy, is described as 'variable with some locations being extremely poorly served'. Accommodation arrangements for the Fingerprint Bureau and certain photography sections is also highlighted within the strategy as particularly unsatisfactory. The standard and appropriateness of accommodation was frequently raised by staff during interviews and, in some instances, it was evident this was causing considerable frustration and impacting on morale. Practitioners have a great deal to offer in progressing these issues and it is vital, therefore, that **scientific support staff should be actively involved in raising the standard of accommodation to ensure that their needs are met in the long term.**
- 3.7 The availability of equipment was also highlighted as an issue and examples were given of CSIs attending crime scenes without the appropriate equipment. In particular, the lack of appropriate equipment for the examination of vehicles at road traffic collisions was identified. A common theme, when these matters were raised, however, was the lack of a clearly identified mechanism or forum through which concerns or difficulties could be tabled and addressed. It is recommended that **matters concerning scientific support staff need to be acknowledged and resolved as a matter of priority either directly with the SSM, through a CSI working group, or alternatively via the Serious and Volume Crime User Groups.**
- 3.8 Inspectors noted that the Service has trained up to 300 staff at DCU level in basic crime scene investigation techniques (i.e. fingerprint recovery) so that volume crime investigation can be better managed. It is apparent however that the majority of these 'trained' staff are rarely called upon to use these skills and there is no structured performance management regime in existence to monitor their impact. The view of the inspectors is that if the Service continues to invest time and resources into training staff in this way, then **PSNI needs to ensure that**

there is a 'return on investment' on initiatives such as fingerprint training, with performance outputs being monitored. It is suggested that this is an issue which should be addressed and developed through the Volume Crime User Group in consultation with the SSM.

- 3.9 A key resource consideration is the provision and management of forensic science databases. The most important database, as identified in the Scientific Support Strategy, relates to DNA evidence. A Northern Ireland DNA offenders database is held in FSNI and is expected to hold profiles of approximately 50,000 individuals. This local database is now linked to the national UK DNA database, following FSNI accreditation of Supplier status. The implementation of recommendations in the CJINI report on FSNI, together with the successful conclusion of an internal FSNI DNA improvement plan should ensure that PSNI receives a much improved and timely service. FSNI also maintains up to date sex offences and drugs databases but its footwear database is dated and it does not have a fingerprints or fibre database. It is known that the PSNI has identified a budget to establish a footwear database and it is therefore imperative the **PSNI should work with key stakeholders, particularly FSNI, to determine what databases are required, where they should be located and how access can be managed.** This recommendation is also made in the CJINI inspection report on FSNI.

Chapter 4 Partnership

- 4.1 The effective and efficient delivery of a forensic science service to the Northern Ireland criminal justice system requires good working relationships with a number of organisations. The principal relationship is with FSNI as the primary supplier of forensic science expertise to the Service. This has been a close relationship for many years manifested by strong personal relationship between individual scientists and police officers and the offer by PSNI to provide a 'temporary' home to the laboratory after the bombing of its previous premises in Belfast. FSNI offered a high degree of flexibility in the service provided to the police including a willingness to undertake additional work and analysis where required. More recently the closeness of the relationship has weakened, due in part to the PSNI's need to demonstrate value for money in its procurement processes and to live within the constraints of its budget.
- 4.2 Joint planning in the past has been largely focused on the annual review of the SLA between both organisations. Inspectors were told that more joint planning is currently taking place including FSNI input to the National Intelligence Model and membership of both the Serious and Volume Crime User Groups. There is now a need to develop this partnership to discuss a wider range of common issues. Inspectors recommend that **regular joint planning should be conducted with the leadership of FSNI, which should focus on:**
- **Developing an improved SLA with a mechanism to ensure compliance**
 - **Clarifying policy and practices in relation to the role and attendance at FSNI scientists at crime scenes**
 - **Improving the submissions processes for forensic science property including continuity of evidence and introduction of hard charging by FSNI**
 - **Providing an improved service in relation to fatal and serious road traffic crashes and collisions**
 - **Improving the coordination and delivery of the fingerprints service**
 - **Managing responsibility and access to existing and new forensic science databases**
 - **Realising the benefits of IT enhancements in FSNI including the introduction of a single point of contact in FSNI**
- 4.3 A recent emerging issue has been the government decision to fund an investigation into the unsolved homicide cases of the Troubles. A budget of over £30 million has been set aside of which over £7 million will be allocated to forensic science investigations. It is considered that new forensic techniques, particularly in DNA retrieval and analysis, will provide a crucial addition to the investigation of these cases. A decision has now been taken that FSNI will receive all of this work, but that much of it will need to be brokered to other forensic science providers. The process of brokering to address capacity gaps in FSNI is therefore a core element of new FSNI business processes. PSNI need to be assured that brokering is providing value for money to the Service.

- 4.4 The CJINI inspection of the State Pathologist's Department in Northern Ireland recommended that **a formal protocol should be agreed between the State Pathologist's Department and PSNI**. This protocol should clarify the role and responsibilities of each party in relation to crime scene attendance, post mortem examinations and subsequent reports. It should also address issues such as the role of the photographic branch at post mortem examinations and the circumstances in which advice can be obtained from the State Pathologist. A recommendation that **PSNI should participate in a pathology forum** is separately covered in the CJINI report.
- 4.5 Forensic Medical Officers (FMO) play a key role in the early stages of scene management and also in the examination of suspects and some witnesses. No concerns were raised as part of this inspection.

Chapter 5 People and Equality

- 5.1 A programme of civilianisation is being implemented within the PSNI meaning that officers are being moved back into operational policing while many administrative and specialist roles such as scientific posts are performed by civilian support staff. Most scientific support staff are now in civilian posts. A challenge for the Service in general is to ensure that civilian posts are properly integrated into the organisation and that any perceived lack of status is addressed.
- 5.2 The recruitment of regular police officers and civilian staff is conducted on a 50:50 basis to ensure a police service that is representative of the community in Northern Ireland. The recruitment campaign for both groups of staff is managed by private recruitment firms. Recent figures (July 2005) published by PSNI show that the perceived Catholic composition of PSNI is 18% for police officers and direct recruits (which includes most scientific support staff). The gender breakdown shows that 20% of police officers and 61% of direct civilian recruits are female. More specific figures for scientific support staff are not available.
- 5.3 A finding from meetings and focus groups with CSIs is that the provision of training is inadequate to meet their needs. A recommendation to develop a more comprehensive internal training strategy for all operational staff is made in Chapter 2. Likewise, training for police officers is covered in that chapter. Training is the means to develop a more flexible skill base and to create more mobility within PSNI to respond to changing forensic science demands. In line with a similar recommendation to FSNI, it is recommended that **a proposed training strategy should include provision for scientific support staff to be registered by the Council for the Registration of Forensic Practitioners (CRFP)**. It is noted that the current Scientific Support Strategy has set a target to seek external accreditation and that this will become a desirable criteria for posts within the Branch.
- 5.4 Pay together with terms and conditions of employment was a concern for many CSIs as well as photography and mapping staff. Inspectors were keen to assess the impact that these issues are having on the provision of an effective out of hours service and the ability to provide a good service to all parts of Northern Ireland. There is a variance in the operation of weekend call out arrangements from area to area. The agreed protocol is that CSI's will not attend volume crime scenes at weekends or other call-out times (12 midnight to 8am typically). This system is being operated differently in some areas and there were examples of CSI's being pressured into attending volume crime scenes by senior police officers in some areas. Sometimes this pressure amounted to a direct order to attend scenes in contravention of Service policy. Some DCU areas where police officers are willing to give orders to CSI's to attend volume crime scenes outside of their normal remit, are therefore receiving a different level of service from those where service policy is strictly applied. Attendance at scenes outside the normal arrangements has led to conflicts between CSI's and their line managers who question claims for overtime and allowances incurred as a result

of attending scenes outside normal working hours and outside of the agreed protocol. It is recommended that **a review of the out of hours service and geographical coverage should be conducted. The review should include remuneration and terms and conditions of employment for scientific support staff.**

- 5.5 Inspectors found CSIs, photographers and mappers were very highly motivated, enthusiastic and committed to the work they do. There were examples of good practice and enthusiasm by roads policing officers who had taken the initiative in training their own dedicated cohort of Family Liaison Officers (FLO's) for use in fatal and serious road traffic crashes. Heads of units displayed a clear sense of the direction they wished to move in and there were examples of good practice in the handling of property and exhibits developed by officers using their own initiative in some DCU areas. Fingerprint officers felt that they had a good working relationship with uniformed police, feeling respected and valued for their work.
- 5.6 Procedures and processes for measuring the performance of scientific support staff is currently under review. Key to the success of any system is the method and indicators used to assess performance. The view of some staff is that these annual performance indicators are incomplete and not supported with evidence and action plans. For example, a number of staff complained about measuring performance based on the number of crime scenes attended. CSIs based in rural areas, often a long distance from crime scenes, felt that lengthy travelling times were not considered when comparisons were made across different policing areas. It is recommended that **improved communication should be established between the SSM and scientific support staff including more effective line management arrangements.** This should lead to a more transparent and effective performance management system.
- 5.7 The introduction of the performance management framework has highlighted disparities in workloads in particular between CSIs working in the urban and some parts of the rural region. Over time, as this performance information is developed further, its enhancement will allow principal CSIs and senior managers within the Branch to better balance 'total' CSI resources to demand. It is appropriate here, to highlight the comparatively low levels of demand, as reflected within the most recent performance information, being placed upon some CSIs working within the more geographically remote areas and to link their existing workloads to the physical location of the current PSNI stations from which they operate. The contention of the inspectors is that some of these bases may not be best located to balance resource to demand (e.g. Newcastle). The performance information now available serves to reinforce the need that **senior Branch managers should reassess the physical location of some CSI bases, in consultation with the relevant DCU commanders, via the Volume Crime User Group, to deliver more effective and efficient CSI working across the Service as a whole.**
- 5.8 The management of CSI's, photographers and mappers at crime scenes is variable. It was reported that some SIO's give precedence to FSNI staff over the CSIs. This has led to some CSIs feeling that they are perceived as being of low

status. CSIs referred to their treatment as ‘demeaning’, and ‘undervaluing our expertise.’ There were examples of tensions between the roles of the Crime Scene Manager (CSM) and the CSI whilst engaged at crime scenes. CSI’s regard the CSM as another resource for crime scene examination whilst the CSM’s consider their role as taking an overview of the scene and not becoming directly involved in it. It is expected that this issue should be included in a wider review of crime scene management, including greater awareness of, and compliance with existing policies.

Chapter 6 Processes

- 6.1 Inspectors were told that serious crime has historically taken precedence over volume crime. A recurring issue throughout interviews was a tension between the prioritisation of serious crime and volume crime submissions to the laboratory. This has resulted in what was described as a 'bartering system'. An initial prioritisation is done by the investigating officer followed by a further screening by the Submissions Unit. This was found to be causing some frustration amongst investigating officers who commented on cases where they had to request the intervention of the detective inspector in order to get exhibits examined or visit the Submissions Unit personally. Whilst this tension is recognised by the Service, it re-emphasises the importance of reviewing the Submissions Unit and processes in light of shifting pressures on demand.
- 6.2 Quality control processes are implemented at various stages of a case. It is at the point of transfer (submission/collection/storage) when greatest care and attention is required. A PSNI policy document provides guidance as to why items are rejected by the Submissions Unit (e.g. evidential relevance) or by FSNI (e.g. exposed to serious contamination risks through improper handling or poor packaging). This is an important safeguard for maintaining the integrity of forensic items and providing continuity of evidence when presented in court. Data from FSNI show an increasing number of referrals back to PSNI. In the period from April to June 2004, there were 60 referrals from FSNI to PSNI. In the period July to September 2004, there were 88. The two principle issues resulting in these referrals were incorrect packaging and/or incorrect or missing paperwork. Following a joint FSNI/PSNI working group to improve processes, FSNI have agreed to provide additional information to PSNI on its control checks and why items are rejected and the PSNI SSM now takes up these issues with individual officers. **Continued monitoring and action on quality control and continuity of evidence issues is necessary to ensure that trends and patterns within the Service are identified and actioned.** Forensic awareness amongst police officers has already been highlighted as an area for improvement. However, there was also evidence from CSIs that non-compliance forms were being issued by FSNI where the only issue was the fact that an obsolete 'RUC' document had been completed as opposed to the new 'PSNI' form. The responsibility must however rest with the Service to ensure that obsolete RUC documents/forms are removed from circulation and destroyed.
- 6.3 Officers commented that they currently receive no information when an item goes to the laboratory and do not know when the sample is to be examined or when a result has been obtained. It is understood that Casebook 3, which is to be installed in FSNI in autumn 2005, will allow for the progress of each case to be tracked. The information will be provided through a single point of contact and will, therefore, have the additional benefit of greatly reducing the impact enquiries have on scientists' time. The single point of contact will mean that customers looking for details of their case(s) will contact one person (perhaps in Customer Services) who will have full details of how a case is progressing and therefore reduce the number of interruptions to scientific work. It is also

understood that FSNI will also be able to determine the cumulative costs of a case as it progresses through the laboratory. **When the single point of contact is introduced in FSNI, it is important that this information and the anticipated benefits is circulated within the Service.**

- 6.4 Inspectors are aware that PSNI has taken a number of steps to improve the efficiency of their processes, but **there remains a need for the Service to develop process-mapping capability and to become much more proactive in this area.** The overall impression gained is that, where individual inefficiencies have been identified, steps have been taken to make improvements. However, a number of processes are inter-dependent and process-mapping would greatly assist in identifying these inter-dependencies.
- 6.5 In order to optimise turn-around times it is important that **exhibits and samples should be correctly packaged and labelled as any errors will result in delays.** It is also important that exhibits and samples are submitted promptly. It was stated, however, that there is currently no formal policy for uplifting samples and that CSIs, particularly in outlying areas, are being used to transport exhibits to the laboratory. This, in turn, not only impacts on CSIs' availability to carry out their core functions but can also result in submissions being delayed until there are sufficient to warrant a journey. In addition, the greater the number of stages in any process, then the greater the potential exists for delays. For example, it was stated that, in relation to DNA and fingerprint hits, results are passed from the laboratory to the SSM who thereafter passes them via the internal mail to the DCU Intelligence Manager. An intelligence document is then created on the ICIS database which is then passed to the Crime Manager. Process-mapping would allow for the critical stages to be identified (for example, to allow for quality control or auditing) and those that are non-essential to be streamlined. The Inspectors do recognise however that the Service has identified the problem of delays in terms of getting forensic exhibits to the laboratory and is in the process of introducing a forensic courier service to overcome it.
- 6.6 Tasking and co-ordinating meetings are held fortnightly across the 29 DCUs on the same day. This, together with CSI location and staffing levels, makes it a practical impossibility for CSIs to attend all meetings. A number of different solutions have been developed to resolve this issue. In one area, for example, analysts debrief the CSIs and then feed into the tasking and co-ordinating process on their behalf. In another, CSIs update command and control with details of outcomes and hits and the relevant information is abstracted from this system. In other areas, however, it was apparent that information from CSIs regarding crime scene investigations was not being fed into the process. Comment was also made by staff within the Fingerprint Bureau that they are in an ideal position to identify changes in trends in the types of job they receive but they are unable to find out why. Process-mapping the way in which different branches obtain intelligence and the way in which it is then managed would allow for good practice to be identified and, potentially, a single system for ensuring that it feeds efficiently into tasking and co-ordinating.

6.7 Process-mapping would also highlight duplication of effort or gaps in processes. For example, Fingerprint Bureau staff receive a large number of requests for statements. They do not, however, necessarily get called to court nor do they always get notification that a court case has been concluded. As a result, staff sometimes find themselves completing statements for cases that have already been concluded. In addition, Fingerprint Bureau staff often do not know what is pending with FSNI and when all examinations have been completed as there is currently no process to advise them. As a result, examples were given where statements for court had to be re-written when outstanding examinations were received from FSNI. An area where the continuity of evidence could be strengthened is in relation to the numbering and recording of items. At present, items collected at crime scenes are given a PSNI reference number. A separate number, in barcode format, is assigned to items when submitted to the laboratory. It is recommended that **a common numbering and identification system, in barcode format and easily scanned, should be agreed and introduced by both PSNI and FSNI.**

Chapter 7 Results

- 7.1 The HMIC baseline assessment of PSNI conducted in April 2004 noted as an area for improvement within the forensic management section that 'the performance management system is not sophisticated and there are issues concerning the reliability of data. There is not a robust and effective mechanism that can link outputs to outcomes and service priorities'. When the baseline assessment was refreshed in October 2004 HMIC further noted that 'there are plans to move towards electronic reporting which will allow CSIs to input information on scenes attended. This will allow principal CSIs to monitor workloads of staff. The system will sit on the Service crime recording system and allow for individual target setting'.
- 7.2 The inspection confirmed that an 'internal' performance management system relating to CSIs and the Fingerprint Bureau has been introduced within the Scientific Support Branch. The computerised data which is now available, relating to CSIs, allows for individual performance to be monitored via specific performance indicators and enables principal CSIs and senior managers to challenge those whose outputs are at lower or less acceptable levels and to assess and address any underlying reasons why performance may not be comparable with peers.
- 7.3 It is clear to inspectors that the introduction of the performance management regime within the Fingerprint Bureau has already had a positive impact. Performance indicators have been established relating to chemical processing, photography, time to third check fingerprints together with total turnaround times. Timelines targets have been set for each of the volume crime teams within the Bureau and performance is monitored on a continuous basis. Performance information to November 2004, confirms the commitment of the Bureau to deliver improved turnaround performance targets for serious and volume crime. Performance targets of 35 days turnaround for cases involving FSNI and 15 days for cases not involving FSNI where set and have been delivered upon. Even tighter targets are now being established – a key target of the Scientific Support Strategy is that 'by April 2007 fingerprints from volume crime incidents, not requiring chemical enhancement, will be routinely processed to identification within an average of 72 hours of receipt'.
- 7.4 It should be noted that the Fingerprint Bureau was particularly adversely affected by severance arrangements under Patten. The performance improvements which have been delivered by the Bureau manager and the team are therefore impressive. The efforts of all the staff who have delivered these enhancements are acknowledged by inspectors who congratulate them warmly.
- 7.5 There is an SLA between Scientific Support Services Branch and the DCUs but inspectors note that it is generic and lacks detail. This is particularly the case in relation to the provision of performance information from the Branch to the DCU Commanders. This information would enable the Branch to monitor the effectiveness of the service in relation to managing volume crime at the local

level. The DCU Commanders interviewed during the inspection confirmed the current lack of performance information available to them, together with their strong desire to be provided with this important management information.

- 7.6 It is the considered view of the inspectors that **the SLA between the Scientific Support Branch and DCUs needs to be improved** with particular attention being placed upon the development and implementation of a suite of performance indicators that will enable DCU commanders to closely monitor the outputs from the Branch in support of volume crime investigation/detection. They suggest that this work should be prioritised and co-ordinated via the Volume Crime Users Group.

Appendix I Recommendations

1. The chief officer team of PSNI should review the portfolios around crime to ensure that there are clear lines of accountability and a clear 'champion' for volume crime. (Para 1.4)
2. The chief officer team of PSNI should conduct regular and formalised strategic planning with senior management in FSNI which then feeds into a more co-ordinated delivery of the forensic science service and to an SLA which has mechanisms to ensure that it is adhered to by both organisations. (Para 1.6)
3. PSNI should set up a properly resourced unit for fatal and serious vehicle crashes and collisions, to reflect the service that currently exists in Great Britain i.e. a dedicated crash and collision investigation unita sufficient number of roads policing staff should be adequately trained in collision investigation, commensurate with training provided in England and Wales and which follows the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) manual of road death investigation. (Para 2.3)
4. A much better resourced Submissions Unit should be put in place, which operates to a robust SLA and has a priority system which recognises the growing importance of volume crime. (Para 2.4)
5. PSNI in co-operation with FSNI, should develop and deliver a bespoke forensic science training package. Comprehensive training for all operational staff should be improved as a matter of priority. (Para 2.6)
6. An urgent review should be carried out of all critical policies. This should result in the production of a suite of comprehensive corporate policies readily available via the Service intranet site, which ensures that procedures are up to date, staff are fully aware of what is expected of them and mechanism are in place to ensure compliance. The areas in need of immediate attention are:
 - Greater awareness of, and compliance with, existing policies on the management and co-ordination of crime scenes including who has primacy for forensic science, attendance and roles of attending specialists
 - Fatal and serious vehicle crashes and collisions investigation
 - Role and authority of the Submissions Unit including clear guidance on submissions priorities
 - Forensic science training and awareness for all operational staff
 - Storage, retention and management of all property (including vehicles)
 - Weeding and destruction of property(Para 2.13)
7. The proposed introduction of hard charging for all products and services by FSNI provides an opportunity for PSNI to identify and develop policies and processes to achieve greater accountability in terms of submissions control and finances. (Para 3.2)

8. The pilot sites for devolved forensic science budgets should be fully evaluated in light of the need to improve accountability for spend. It is also essential that the now-established Serious and Volume Crimes User Groups fully embrace their monitoring roles to ensure that non-performance issues under the SLA are actioned. (Para 3.4)
9. Scientific support staff should be actively involved in raising the standard of accommodation to ensure that their needs are met in the long term. (Para 3.6)
10. Matters concerning scientific support staff need to be acknowledged and resolved as a matter of priority either directly with the SSM, through a CSI working group, or alternatively via the Serious and Volume Crime User Groups. (Para 3.7)
11. PSNI needs to ensure that there is a 'return on investment' on initiatives such as fingerprint training, with performance outputs being monitored. (Para 3.8)
12. PSNI should work with key stakeholders, particularly FSNI, to determine what databases are required, where they should be located and how access can be managed. (Para 3.9)
13. Regular joint planning should be conducted with the leadership of FSNI, which should focus on:
 - Developing an improved SLA with a mechanism to ensure compliance
 - Clarifying policy and practices in relation to the role and attendance at FSNI scientists at crime scenes
 - Improving the submissions processes for forensic science property including continuity of evidence and introduction of hard charging by FSNI
 - Providing an improved service in relation to fatal and serious road traffic crashes and collisions
 - Improving the coordination and delivery of the fingerprints service
 - Managing responsibility and access to existing and new forensic science databases
 - Realising the benefits of IT enhancements in FSNI including the introduction of a single point of contact in FSNI(Para 4.2)
14. A formal protocol should be agreed between the State Pathologist's Department and PSNI. (Para 4.4)
15. PSNI should participate in a pathology forum. (Para 4.4)
16. A proposed training strategy should include provision for scientific support staff to be registered by the Council for the Registration of Forensic Practitioners. (Para 5.3)
17. A review of the out of hours service and geographical coverage should be conducted. The review should include remuneration and terms and conditions of employment for scientific support staff. (Para 5.4)

18. Improved communication should be established between the SSM and scientific support staff including more effective line management arrangements. (Para 5.6)
19. Senior Branch managers should reassess the physical location of some CSI bases, in consultation with the relevant DCU commanders, via the Volume Crime User Group, to deliver more effective and efficient CSI working across the Service as a whole. (Para 5.7)
20. Continued monitoring and action on quality control and continuity of evidence issues is necessary to ensure that trends and patterns within the Service are identified and actioned. (Para 6.2)
21. When the single point of contact is introduced in FSNI, it is important that this information and the anticipated benefits is circulated within the Service. (Para 6.3)
22. There remains a need for the Service to develop process-mapping capability and to become much more pro-active in this area. (Para 6.4)
23. Exhibits and samples should be correctly packaged and labelled as any errors will result in delays. (Para 6.5)
24. A common numbering and identification system, in barcode format and easily scanned, should be agreed and introduced by both PSNI and FSNI. (Para 6.7)
25. The SLA between the Scientific Support Branch and DCUs needs to be improved. (Para 7.6)

Appendix 2 Methodology

The inspection commenced from December 2004 onwards and consisted of the following main elements:

1. Research and data collection
2. Consultation - stakeholder interviews
3. PSNI fieldwork
4. Feedback and refinement

1. Research and data collection

Documentation concerning PSNI and in particular scientific support services was sourced and consulted. These included:

1. A New Beginning: Policing in Northern Ireland, The Report of the Independent Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland, September 1999
2. Baseline Assessment of PSNI, HMIC, 2004
3. General Order 47/2004, 'Duties of personnel attending a serious crime scene', PSNI
4. General Order 48/2004, 'Serious Crime Investigation – Forensic Management Strategy', PSNI
5. Memorandum of Understanding in relation to forensic science materials, between FSNI, PSNI and PPS
6. Northern Ireland Policing Board, Annual Report, 1 April 2003-31 March 2004
7. PSNI annual reports and accounts
8. PSNI Forensic Demands, Strategic Assessment, September 2005
9. PSNI Forensic Submissions Policy
10. PSNI website
11. Quinquennial review of Forensic Science Northern Ireland, stage two report, NIO, January 2004
12. Review of the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland, March 2000
13. Scientific Support Strategy in support of PSNI Policing Plan 2004 – 2007, PSNI
14. Service Level Agreements between Forensic Science Northern Ireland and PSNI
15. Under the Microscope, HMIC thematic inspection report, 2000
16. Using Forensic Science Effectively, 1996, ACPO/FSS

2. Consultation - stakeholder interviews

As this inspection coincided with the inspection of Forensic Science Northern Ireland, an extensive and comprehensive range of views were obtained from staff within FSNI. In addition, meetings were conducted with staff within the Public

Prosecution Service, the Northern Ireland Office and the State Pathologist's Department.

3. PSNI fieldwork

A team of two CJINI Inspectors and two HMIC inspectors conducted a programme of interviews and focus groups with a wide range of police and civilian scientific support staff within PSNI in February 2005. The planning of the programme of meetings was greatly assisted by PSNI.

4. Feedback and refinement

A draft inspection report together with the proposed recommendations was prepared from the evidence gathered during the inspection and forwarded to PSNI in August 2005. Detailed feedback was received from PSNI in October. It was agreed that PSNI would prepare an action plan, which would be published alongside the report.

Appendix 3 PSNI Action Plan

Recommendation	Accepted/ rejected	Action Plan	Responsibility
1 The chief officer team of PSNI should review the portfolios around crime to ensure that there are clear lines of accountability and a clear 'champion' for volume crime. (Para 1.4).	Accepted	A review of portfolio will accompany personnel changes within the chief officer team.	Chief Officer Team
2 The chief officer team of PSNI should conduct regular and formalised strategic planning with senior management in FSNI which then feeds into a more coordinated delivery of the forensic science service and to an SLA which has mechanisms to ensure that it is adhered to by both organizations. (Para 1.6)	Accepted	A bi-annual strategic planning meeting, under the chairmanship of the Deputy Chief Constable, is to be arranged with the senior management team of PSNI and FSNI.	DCC
3 PSNI should set up a properly resourced unit for fatal and serious vehicle crashes and collisions, to reflect the service that currently exists in Great Britain i.e. a dedicated crash and collision investigation unit ...a sufficient number of roads policing staff should be adequately trained in collision investigation, commensurate with training provided in England and Wales and which follows the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) manual of road death investigation. (Para 2.3)	Rejected	PSNI has considered a number of options to the investigation of fatal and serious road traffic collisions and has chosen an approach which will deliver a fully effective, professional service. Considerable investment has already been made with FSNI to develop the necessary scientific and technical expertise sufficient to meet the requirement.	
4 A much better resourced Submissions Unit should be put in place, which operates to a robust SLA and has a priority system which recognises the growing importance of volume crime. (Para 2.4)	Accepted	This is a complex recommendation which addresses the role of the Submissions Unit, the Service Level Agreement with FSNI and the priority given to volume crime submissions. As regards the resourcing of the submissions unit, a review of CSI and submissions procedures has begun which will address the present structure in which the submissions unit is headed by a Detective Inspector who holds joint responsibility for CSI and forensic submissions. The review will make recommendations	ACC Crime Ops

		<p>regarding that aspect of scientific support structure with a view to ensuring the unit is appropriately staffed and managed. The delegation of submissions to a local level, where a report is pending December 2005, will also require to be studied for its impact on the Unit.</p> <p>The Service Level Agreement is subject to annual review and the terms reflect the anticipated demands which will arise from PSNI. The existing SLA contains terms for dealing with both over and under capacity demand. Future reviews of the Agreement will detail more precisely the mechanisms for dealing with fluctuations in demand.</p> <p>The priority given to forensic submissions from volume crime incidents reflects the overall Service priorities and the resources available for processing demands from such incidents. The pilot of the delegation of forensic submissions to DCU level will be studied for it's application to this recommendation.</p> <p>The Volume Crime User Group has approved submissions policies and will have direct input into the contents of future SLA. A general Order (35/2005) Volume Crime Scene Attendance Procedures has been published and is available on the PoliceNet site.</p> <p>The Unit will require additional IT support in regard to casework management systems. Such a system is to be purchased within 2005/06 financial year and will be interfaced into the crime recording system.</p> <p>PSNI has established a strategic forensic training group, reporting to the Head of Operational Development Programmes and head of Scientific Support. FSNI is represented on the Group. The Group will present a comprehensive forensic training programme for approval at chief officer level.</p>	<p>Head of Scientific Support</p> <p>Head of Scientific Support</p> <p>Head of Scientific Support</p> <p>Head of Information Management</p>
<p>5 PSNI in co-operation with FSNI, should develop and deliver a bespoke forensic science training package. Comprehensive training for all operational staff should be improved as a matter of priority. (Para 2.6)</p>	<p>Accepted in modified form*.</p>		<p>Chair forensic training group</p>

<p>6 An urgent review should be carried out of all critical policies. This should result in the production of a suite of comprehensive corporate policies readily available via the Service intranet site, which ensures that procedures are up to date and staff are fully aware of what is expected of them and mechanism are in place to ensure compliance. The areas in need of immediate attention are:</p> <p>6.1 Greater awareness of and compliance with existing policies on the management and coordination of crime scenes including who has primacy for forensic science, attendance and roles of attending specialists.</p> <p>6.2 Fatal and serious vehicle crashes and collisions investigation</p> <p>6.3 Role and authority of the Submissions Unit including clear guidance on submissions priorities</p> <p>6.4 Forensic science training and awareness for all operational staff</p> <p>6.5 Storage, retention and management of all property (including vehicles)</p> <p>6.6 Weeding and destruction of property.. (Para 2.13)</p> <p>7 The proposed introduction of hard charging for all</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>*A high quality, forensic awareness training package has recently been delivered by the Home Office Forensic Science Service, working in collaboration with ACPO and Centrex, and with direct input from PSNI. It is anticipated that this package will form the core of a number of training programmes identified through the training group.</p> <p>As a result of the work of the Group amendments have already been made to student officer and supervisor training programmes to enhance forensic awareness.</p> <p>6.1 General Order 47/04 and 48/04 both of which are available on PoliceNet set out the responsibilities of officers at serious crime scenes. Awareness and compliance issues will be addressed through supervisory officer training programmes, which have already commenced, and reviews of serious incidents undertaken by the Serious Crime Review Team.</p> <p>6.2 Is the responsibility of Roads policing</p> <p>6.3 Policy has been documented and is awaiting publication (see also recommendation 4)</p> <p>6.4 a comprehensive forensic awareness training strategy is in development and will be placed before the Chief officer's group for approval (see also recommendation 5)</p> <p>6.5/6.6 A memorandum of Understanding has recently been signed with FSNi regarding retention and storage of PSNI materials. Existing policies within scientific support are under review.</p> <p>The development of the property module within the records management system will assist with the management of property. Further work, outside the responsibility of scientific support, is required within DCU regarding provisions for the storage of property.</p> <p>Work is on-going to establish systems for the effective management of vehicles.</p> <p>PSNI welcomes a move towards output based charging by FSNi</p>	<p>Chair forensic training group</p>
	<p>Accepted</p>		<p>Head of SCRT</p> <p>D/Insp Scientific Support</p> <p>Chair forensic training group</p> <p>Head of Scientific Support</p> <p>ACC Operational Support</p> <p>Head of Scientific Support</p>

<p>products and services by PSNI provides an opportunity for PSNI to identify and develop policies and processes to achieve greater accountability in terms of submissions control and finances. (Para 3.2)</p>		<p>and acknowledges the greater transparency this will bring to the process. This recommendation cannot, however, be implemented by PSNI until FSNi identifies its' charging regime, refines its' product costs and begins to identify the process it wishes to develop for cost recovery. The delegated submissions exercise has already laid some of the ground work within PSNI for the implementation of this scheme.</p>	<p>Head of Scientific Support</p>
<p>8 The pilot sites for devolved forensic science budgets should be fully evaluated in light of the need to improve accountability for spend. It is also essential that the now-established Serious and Volume Crimes User Groups fully embrace their monitoring roles to ensure that non-performance issues under the SLA are actioned. (Para 3.4)</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>The budget delegations exercise is now complete. The findings will be reported to the Volume Crime User Group for its consideration and will be presented at a workshop planned for November 2005.</p> <p>Non-conformance issues will be referred to the Serious and Volume Crime user Groups as appropriate.</p>	<p>Chair of Sub group</p> <p>Head of Scientific Support</p> <p>ACC Crime Ops</p>
<p>9 Scientific support staff should be actively involved in raising the standard of accommodation to ensure that their needs are met in the long term. (Para 3.6)</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>New accommodation has already been made available to Scientific Support staff in Mahon Road. Scientific Support is presently represented in the review of Crime Operations accommodation where the issue of the accommodation provision for the Fingerprint Bureau is under review.</p> <p>Scientific Support management is also engaged with Estates Services in reviewing CSI accommodation provided within DCU. (see also recommendation 19)</p>	<p>Head of Scientific Support / Head of Estates Services</p>
<p>10 Matters concerning scientific support staff need to be acknowledged and resolved as a matter of priority either directly with the SSM, through a CSI working group, or alternatively via the Serious and Volume Crime User Groups. (Para 3.7)</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>At the direction of ACC Crime Operations, a CSI working group has been established under the chairmanship of a senior detective officer. The group will report its' findings to ACC Crime Operations for implementation.</p>	<p>ACC Crime Operations</p>
<p>11 PSNI needs to ensure that there is a 'return on investment' on initiatives such as fingerprint training, with performance outputs being monitored. (Para 3.8)</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>Performance data is now available to the Head of Scientific Support. The forensic training group will act as gatekeeper for the delivery of the training programme and will monitor the effectiveness of training provisions.</p>	<p>Chair forensic training group</p>
<p>12 PSNI should work with key stakeholders,</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>A proposal has been forthcoming from the Analysis Centre for the</p>	

<p>particularly FSNI, to determine what databases are required, where they should be located and how access can be managed. (Para 3.9)</p>		<p>establishment of a persistent offenders linked crimes analysis unit (POLinCA). The Unit will merge and analyse data from forensic identifications (fingerprints, DNA, footwear marks, amongst others) with that from crime recording and other PSNI systems in order to provide comprehensive intelligence briefs to investigators.</p>	<p>Director Analysis Centre</p>
<p>13 Regular joint planning should be conducted with the leadership of FSNI, which should focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing an improved SLA with a mechanism to ensure compliance • Clarifying policy and practices in relation to the role and attendance of FSNI scientists at crime scenes • Improving the submissions processes for forensic science property including continuity of evidence and introduction of hard charging by FSNI • Providing an improved service in relation to fatal and serious road traffic crashes and collisions • Improving the coordination and delivery of the fingerprints service • Managing responsibility and access to existing and new forensic science databases • Realising the benefits of IT enhancements in FSNI including the introduction of a single point of contact in FSNI <p>(Para 4.2)</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>PSNI and FSNI are now engaged in joint planning in a number of forums including; the Volume Crime User Group, under the chairmanship of ACC Rural, the Serious Crime User Group, under the chairmanship of ACC Crime Operations, the Forensic Science Steering Group, under the chairmanship of the NIO and a proposed high level strategic group which will be chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable. In addition, to facilitate the development of FSNI's accommodation strategy, PSNI has recently produced a strategic assessment of its future demands for forensic support and has entered into a Corporate Understanding with FSNI regarding the future provision of forensic science support. Issues relating to the quality of submissions are addressed within a joint Quality Group which meets on a monthly basis and FSNI now receives weekly updates on PSNI casework priorities.</p> <p>These groups provide a comprehensive basis through which the issues raised in this recommendation can be addressed.</p> <p>(See also recommendations 3, 7,12)</p>	<p>DCC, ACC Crime Ops, ACC Rural</p>
<p>14 A formal protocol should be agreed between the State Pathologist's Department and PSNI. (Para 4.4)</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>Consultation will be undertaken with the State Pathologist's Department and other stakeholders regarding the establishment of a protocol.</p>	<p>Head of Serious Crime Branch</p>
<p>15 PSNI should participate in a pathology forum. (Para 4.4)</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>Consultation will be undertaken with the State Pathologist's Department and other stakeholders regarding the establishment of a forum.</p>	<p>Head of Serious Crime Branch</p>
<p>16 A proposed training strategy should include</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>Registration with the Council for the Registration of Forensic</p>	

<p>provision for scientific support staff to be registered by the Council for the Registration of Forensic Practitioners. (Para 5.3)</p>		<p>Practitioners is already encouraged by the SSM. Financial provision has been made to cover the costs of individual registrations. From April 2005 all newly appointed CSI are required to achieve registration with CRFP within 3 years of appointment. Registration with CRFP will increasingly be used as an essential criteria for first line supervisory positions.</p>	<p>Head of Scientific Support</p>
<p>17 A review of the out of hours service and geographical coverage should be conducted. The review should include remuneration and terms and conditions of employment for scientific support staff. (Para 5.4)</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>The terms and conditions form part of the terms of reference under which the CSI review group has been formulated. It will be further informed by work commissioned from Lanner Consultants who provide a package recommended by the Police Standards Unit for the review of scientific support services and procedures. (See also recommendation 22)</p>	<p>Head of Scientific Support</p>
<p>18 Improved communication should be established between the SSM and scientific support staff including more effective line management arrangements. (Para 5.6)</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>A communications policy has been developed for the Branch which sets out the means by which information will be communicated to staff. A quarterly bulletin is issued to all staff which highlights branch issues and achievements. A recognition/commentation scheme at a local level has been proposed to ACC Crime Operations. The SSM has commenced a programme of regular visits to CSI offices and has briefed staff on the scientific support strategy. A scientific support site within PoliceNet has been developed to which bulletins, professional information, etc are appended.</p>	<p>Head of Scientific Support</p>
<p>19 Senior Branch managers should reassess the physical location of some CSI bases, in consultation with the relevant DCU commanders, via the Volume Crime User Group, to deliver more effective and efficient CSI working across the Service as a whole. (Para 5.7)</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>A review programme, involving consultancy support as noted above (recommendation 17) is underway. The programme will provide a data model based on which the effectiveness of CSI locations can be evaluated. The outcome will be fully considered within Crime Operations and by DCU Commanders.</p>	<p>Head of Scientific Support</p>
<p>20 Continued monitoring and action on quality control and continuity of evidence issues is necessary to ensure that trends and patterns within the Service are identified and actioned. (Para 6.2)</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>A regular monthly quality monitoring meeting has been established with FSNI. Scientific Support is represented by the D/Insp in charge of forensic submissions. Outcomes from serious crime reviews are examined for trends and officers advised appropriately. Any non-conformances in serious crime investigations are immediately advised by FSNI.</p>	<p>D/Insp Scientific Support</p>
<p>21 When the single point of contact is introduced in</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>FSNI must ensure that PSNI is advised of plans for the operation</p>	<p>Head of</p>

<p>FSNI, it is important that this information and the anticipated benefits is circulated within the Service. (Para 6.3)</p>		<p>of the scheme at the earliest opportunity.</p>	<p>Scientific Support</p>
<p>22 There remains a need for the Service to develop process-mapping capability and to become much more pro-active in this area. (Para 6.4)</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>Scoping exercises which have been undertaken in regard to IT developments within Scientific Support have already provided much process mapping. A consultancy group, recommended to all forces by the Police Standards Unit, has been engaged to develop process simulation models which will then be used to investigate alternative methods of working. It is anticipated that the initial findings will be presented at a seminar planned for November 2005. The final outcome from the work will be presented to the SSM in early 2006.</p>	<p>Head of Scientific Support</p>
<p>23 Exhibits and samples should be correctly packaged and labelled as any errors will result in delays. (Para 6.5)</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>The PSNI/FSNI quality group meeting as noted above will assist with the identification of these issues.</p> <p>The delegated submissions exercise has also assisted with the development of knowledge at a local level regarding packaging requirements.</p> <p>Changes to training programmes, including competency assessment, as noted at 5 above, will provide additional input regarding the collection and preparation of items for scientific examination.</p>	<p>D/Insp Scientific Support</p> <p>Chair forensic training group</p>
<p>24 A common numbering and identification system, in barcode format and easily scanned, should be agreed and introduced by both PSNI and FSNI. (Para 6.7)</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>The introduction of a new property management system within PSNI which will include exhibit tracking facilities will highlight this issue. Exploratory work has already acknowledged the FSNI exhibit management processes.</p>	<p>ACC Operational Support</p>
<p>25 The SLA between the Scientific Support Branch and DCUs needs to be improved. (Para 7.6).</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>This recommendation will be progressed via the Volume Crime User Group. Revised draft SLA will be laid before the Group meeting in December 2005.</p>	<p>Head of Scientific Support</p>

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