

Forensic Science Northern Ireland

Corporate Plan 2021-2024 & Business Plan 2021-2022



CONTENTS

Foreword by the Chief Executive	3
Our Operating Environment	4
Mission, Vision and Values	5
Who we are	6
• Budget	
• Our people	
• Organisational governance	
Strategic Outcomes and Objectives	9
Measuring and Monitoring Performance	10
Annex A – FSNI Business Plan 2021-2022	11
Annex B – FSNI Organisation chart	16

Foreword by the Chief Executive

I am pleased to present Forensic Science Northern Ireland's Corporate Plan for 2021 – 2024. The plan outlines what we believe needs to be achieved over the next three years, not just within the Agency itself but, also, in support of the effective and efficient working of the N.I. Criminal Justice System (NICJS) and the implementation of the N.I. Forensic Services Strategy (NIFSS).

FSNI's primary function is to independently and objectively support the Criminal Justice System by using not just the most current scientific methods and practices but also by drawing upon over 50 years of experience in developing and employing a diverse and comprehensive range of forensic services. With over 76% of staff directly involved in the integrated delivery of a comprehensive range of scientific specialisms, our mission is "scientific excellence delivered in partnership supporting justice for all". Our staff are committed to objectivity and independence, delivered with integrity and professionalism and are backed by our quality accreditation to ISO 17025.

FSNI is keen to ensure that this corporate plan addresses the emerging threats, challenges and opportunities facing the delivery of forensic science

services. A number of key strategies have been developed which will progress a range of digital and quality, process improvements and innovation in products and services aimed at ensuring services continue to meet emerging requirements, customer and stakeholder needs.

A key tenet of the NIFSS is understanding the value of forensic services. The Value project delivered in conjunction with the Ulster University, to capture the value Forensic Services brings to victims and families and the wider public, police investigations, and indeed the NICJS as a whole, from crime scene through to court will inform investment in forensic services.

The future delivery model for forensic services will also be explored in some detail during this period. This will look at forensic services currently delivered across both FSNI and PSNI and it is expected that an options appraisal will be developed during this corporate planning period which may have longer term strategic and structural impacts.



Gillian Morton
Chief Executive

Operating Environment

In November 2019 a novel strain of Coronavirus was detected and spread rapidly, leading the World Health Organisation to declare a pandemic on 11 March 2020. The ongoing disruption caused by the pandemic has created significant economic uncertainty, and this uncertainty is expected to continue beyond 2021. Covid-19 had a significant impact across the wider justice system and priorities and the immediate impact of social distancing and other measures such as working from home has had a corresponding impact on FSNI staff and capacity. Innovative solutions have been found to ensure business continuity including how we communicate with each other and we will ensure that new and improved ways of working are embedded going forward.

On 31 January 2020, the Withdrawal Agreement between the UK and the EU became legally binding and the UK left the EU. As the relationship between the EU and the UK continues to evolve, we will monitor developments and plan for any anticipated impact on the organisation.



FSNI were informed by our landlord on 29th June 2020 that following the survey of a roof on a neighbouring building there was potentially a health and safety risk with the structure of the main building roof. The longer term future of the building has yet to be confirmed and whilst measures have been put in place to reoccupy parts of the building safely, plans for new accommodation are being developed. FSNI will partly occupy temporary accommodation during the period of this Corporate Plan whilst progressing designs and approval for a business case for a permanent new building.

The challenges above will all inform key priorities, objectives and targets in the annual business plans for the duration of this corporate planning period.

Agency Vision, Mission and Values

Our Vision

“To be a world class provider of integrated forensic science services.”

The Agency's vision and mission statements reflect the emphasis on the organisation being demonstrably business-like and responsive to the needs of customers and stakeholders in the development and delivery of a wide range of high quality, modern, efficient, integrated and affordable specialist forensic services. The Agency's experience in integrating the recovery, analysis and interpretation of diverse evidence types from individual exhibits is one of its key differentiating strengths and permits the optimal exploitation of evidential opportunities – a capability of particular importance in serious crime, which constitutes the bulk of FSNI's work.

Our Mission

“Scientific excellence delivered in partnership supporting justice for all.”

This mission is realised through:

- A forensic science support service for the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), the State Pathologist's Department (SPD), the Office of the Police

Ombudsman for Northern Ireland (OPONI), and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC);

- Scientific advice for the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) and the legal profession; and,
- Objective expert testimony to the Courts.

Agency Values

RESPECT

We commit to treating our people and our stakeholders with dignity and establishing collaborative working relationships.

INTEGRITY

We commit to acting with openness and honesty at all times, inspiring trust in the work that we undertake.

IMPARTIALITY

We commit to acting independently providing unbiased expert evidence to support the needs of the community and justice for all.

INNOVATIVE

We commit to encouraging an innovative, creative culture, empowering staff to seek new ways of working and continuous improvement.

Who We Are

Our People

As an Executive Agency of the Department of Justice's Safer Communities Directorate, FSNI is led by Gillian Morton, Chief Executive, supported by the FSNI Leadership Board. The Leadership Board currently comprises three Executive Directors. Alison McElveen Acting Reporting Services Director, with responsibility for the Chief Executive Office and ICT, Stephen Campbell, Laboratory Services and Quality Director and William McCollum, Customer and Corporate Services Director. The Leadership Board also includes two Independent Board Members (IBMs).

The Leadership Board is supported by the Agency's Senior Management Team (SMT). The SMT consists of heads of section or team managers and other senior managers. The main purpose of the SMT is to manage the day-to-day operation of the Agency to ensure delivery of objectives.

The number of persons employed at 31 March 2021 by FSNI was 191. This includes Management, Scientific and Administrative resources. The majority of FSNI staff are either Scientific or Administrative Grades with

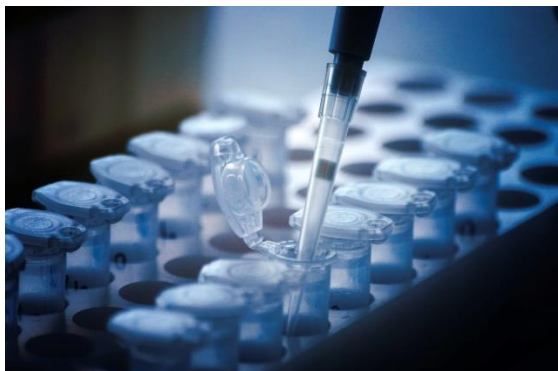
Administrative Grades directly engaged in support of the delivery of the science e.g. involved in the receipt and storage of exhibits and casefiles or in support of maintaining the Quality Management System.

HR, Finance and ICT Services are all provided through NICS Shared Services Arrangements.



Our people are the most important resource within FSNI. Without our professional, skilled and highly motivated members of staff FSNI would not be able to deliver any of this Corporate Plan. To safeguard, recruit, retain and develop our people the FSNI HR Strategy has been developed which links to the NICS People Strategy.

Our Services



FSNI employs a wide range of forensic disciplines, including DNA; latent fingerprints; explosives; micro-chemistry; firearms; fires; physical methods; biology; alcohol, drugs and toxicology; road traffic collisions; questioned documents and digital electronics.

The majority of the work involves the recovery, analysis and evaluation of evidence submitted in connection with a range of crimes, from murders, sexual and violent offences, firearms, explosives, arson and assault, through to more volume crime cases such as fraud, burglaries and car crimes. The Agency also investigates road traffic collisions and provides analysis for

Budget

FSNI has a hybrid funding model to resource the activities of this plan. The DoJ provides baseline funding to secure key services and customers pay to reserve capacity through Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) / Service Level Agreements (SLAs) or pay for products on a pay-as-you-go basis.

cases involving the possession and/or supply of drugs as well as toxicological analysis for the SPD, to help determine the cause of death.

FSNI provides an on-call service to attend crime or fatal collision scenes and provide support to the PSNI in the strategy for selection and recovery of evidence and subsequent relevance in the case investigation.

FSNI's Reporting Officers advise the PPS on the meaning of scientific evidence and provide objective Expert Witness to the Courts in any subsequent proceedings and prosecution.



The annual baseline budget for 2021-2022 is £13.6m, with 66% allocated primarily to salaries and other staff costs.

The DOJ fund FSNI's capital requirements and the capital allocation for 2021-2022 was £1.1m.

Organisational Governance

Corporate governance and risk management forms a core part of the work of FSNI with established arrangements in place for audit and accountability together with external accreditation through United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) to the ISO17025:2017 standard. A governance framework comprises the systems and processes, culture and values by which the Agency is directed and controlled, and the activities through which it accounts to and engages with stakeholders.

An FSNI Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (A&RAC) is chaired by one of our Independent Board Members. Risks are identified and pro-actively managed with a view to minimising the impact on FSNI's ability to meet corporate objectives and targets. Additional assurance is provided by the DoF Government Internal Audit Service that works to Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, reviewing the overall arrangements for managing risk, providing assurance and reporting any matters of concern to the FSNI A&RAC.

Strategic Outcomes and Objectives



Measuring and Monitoring Performance

Measuring and monitoring performance against the Corporate and Annual Business Plans is fully integrated into governance arrangements for the FSNI Leadership Board. In 2021-2022 and the following two years, an Annual Business Plan will be developed to support delivery of the outcomes by 2024. This will set out in greater detail how the strategic outcomes will be delivered. Detailed updates against objectives and targets will be discussed at Leadership Board meetings. In addition, a risk register will be maintained which details actions to be taken to mitigate against risks/threats to

the achievement of the strategic outcomes.

The Agency will focus on the outcomes as well as the underpinning individual targets detailed in the Annual Business Plans. This approach will allow the Department of Justice to hold FSNI to account for the full range of its activities. Directorate business plans, are also developed annually, taking their lead from the high level outcomes within this Corporate Plan.

A formal assessment of the Annual Business Plans will be published in the Annual Report and Accounts.

FSNI Business Plan 2021/22



Customers: Collaborative and streamlined service provision responsive to customer and stakeholder needs

Ref	Lead	What will we do?	FSNI Strategic outcome
C1.1	DORS	By 31 March 2022 to achieve key performance indicators agreed in the PSNI MOU (Memorandum of Understanding).	C1 Services aligned to changing customer needs
C1.2	DORS	Work jointly with PSNI on the development of a project TOR (Terms of Reference) and delivery plan that will look at collating and evaluating the value of forensic services in the end to end criminal justice process	C1 Services aligned to changing customer needs
C1.3	DOLS	By 30 April 2021 to review and update the joint FSNI/PSNI 5 year DNA Strategy Delivery Plan	C2 Customers and stakeholders recognise the value FS brings to the Criminal Justice System (CJS)
C1.4	DOLS	By 31 March 2022 to deliver the in-year actions in the DNA Strategy	C2 Customers and stakeholders recognise the value FS brings to the Criminal Justice System (CJS)
C1.5	DORS	By 30 April 2021 to review and update the annual customer and stakeholder engagement plan	C2 Customers and stakeholders recognise the value FS brings to the Criminal Justice System (CJS)
C1.6	DORS	Develop a customer and stakeholder survey to inform baseline satisfaction levels and education/awareness needs by 31 October 2021	C2 Customers and stakeholders recognise the value FS brings to the Criminal Justice System (CJS)
C1.7	DORS	By 31 March 2022 to deliver the in-year actions in the customer and stakeholder engagement plan	C2 Customers and stakeholders recognise the value FS brings to the Criminal Justice System (CJS)
C1.8	DORS	By 31 March 2022 to deliver the agreed Coroners Legacy forensic requirements	C3 Ensure strategic alignment with the Department and other stakeholders

Processes: A culture of innovation and improvement

Ref	Lead	What will we do?	FSNI Strategic outcome
P1.1	DOLS	By 31 March 2022 to maintain accreditation to ISO 17025 standard	P4 Develop and implement an integrated quality assurance model
P1.2	DOLS	By 31 March 2022 to deliver the in-year actions on the Extensions to Scope (ETS) plan	P4 Develop and implement an integrated quality assurance model
P1.3	DOLS/ DORS	By 31 March 2022 to deliver the in-year actions from the ISO 17020 accreditation plan.	P4 Develop and implement an integrated quality assurance model
P1.4	DORS	By 30 April 2021 to agree the priorities for the 2021/22 Business Improvement Plan	P1 Drive process efficiency
P1.5	DORS	By 31 March 2022 to deliver the in-year actions in the Business Improvement Plan	P1 Drive process efficiency
P1.6	DORS	Participate in a joint review of Forensic support to Road Traffic Collisions and take forward FSNI recommendations arising from the report	P1 Drive process efficiency
P1.7	DOLS/ CCSD	By 30 June 2021 to refresh in-year actions in the legislation awareness plan.	P2 Ensure excellence in information management and data integrity
P1.8	DOLS/ CCSD	By 31 March 2022 to deliver in-year actions required from legislation awareness plan.	P2 Ensure excellence in information management and data integrity
P1.9	DORS	By agreed date FSNI to have "on boarded" all sections to CM 9.4	P1 Drive process efficiency
P1.10	DOLS/ DORS	By 30 June 2021 to review and develop the in-year plan for the development of Sample Manager	P3 Align FSNI's end-to-end Case Management with the needs of CJS stakeholders and faster, fairer Justice
P1.11	DOLS/ DORS	By 31 March 2022 to deliver the in-year actions in the plan to enhance the development of Sample Manager.	P3 Align FSNI's end-to-end Case Management with the needs of CJS stakeholders and faster, fairer Justice
P1.12	DOLS	By 30 June 2021 to develop a plan to develop products/services in readiness for DUID legislation	P5 Develop and implement a joint Research and Development (R&D) programme
P1.13	DORS	By 30 June 2021 to develop a plan to ensure FSNI products are reviewed and understanding of products and services are understood	P1 Drive process efficiency

Organisation: An engaged workforce delivering a quality service

Ref	Lead	What will we do?	FSNI Strategic outcome
O1.1	DORS	By 31 March 2022 to deliver the in-year actions on the FSNI ICT/Digital Strategy	O2 Develop and exploit effective line of business and MIS systems
O1.2	DORS	Development of MI from composite agency-wide project register to inform benefits realisation, process improvements and management decisions going forward.	O2 Develop and exploit effective line of business and MIS systems
O1.3	CCSD	Develop a 5 year strategic staffing resource plan by 30 Sep 2021	O4 Ensure staff are equipped to meet the needs of the organisation
O1.4	CCSD	By 31 May 2021 to develop an action plan in response to FSNI results from the 2020 NICS staff survey	O4 Ensure staff are equipped to meet the needs of the organisation
O1.5	CCSD	Complete a Training Needs Analysis to inform a 3 year Strategic Training Plan by 31 March 22	O4 Ensure staff are equipped to meet the needs of the organisation
O1.6	CCSD	By 31 March 2022 to have delivered the in-year actions in the HR Strategy	O4 Ensure staff are equipped to meet the needs of the organisation
O1.7	CCSD (All)	By 31 March 2022 to support staff welfare by effective management of sick absence in accordance with NICS procedures.	O4 Ensure staff are equipped to meet the needs of the organisation
O1.8	CCSD (All)	By 31 March 2022 to support staff development though effective performance management in accordance with NICS procedures	O4 Ensure staff are equipped to meet the needs of the organisation
O1.9	CCSD	By 30 May 2021 to develop and agree an action plan to progress new accommodation project	O3 Ensure accommodation and infrastructures meet our current and anticipated requirements
O1.10	CCSD	By 31 March 2022 to have delivered the in-year action in the new accommodation project	O3 Ensure accommodation and infrastructures meet our current and anticipated requirements
O1.11	DORS	By 31 March 2022 to develop and agree the FSNI Business Plan for 2022/23	O2 Develop and exploit effective line of business and MIS systems

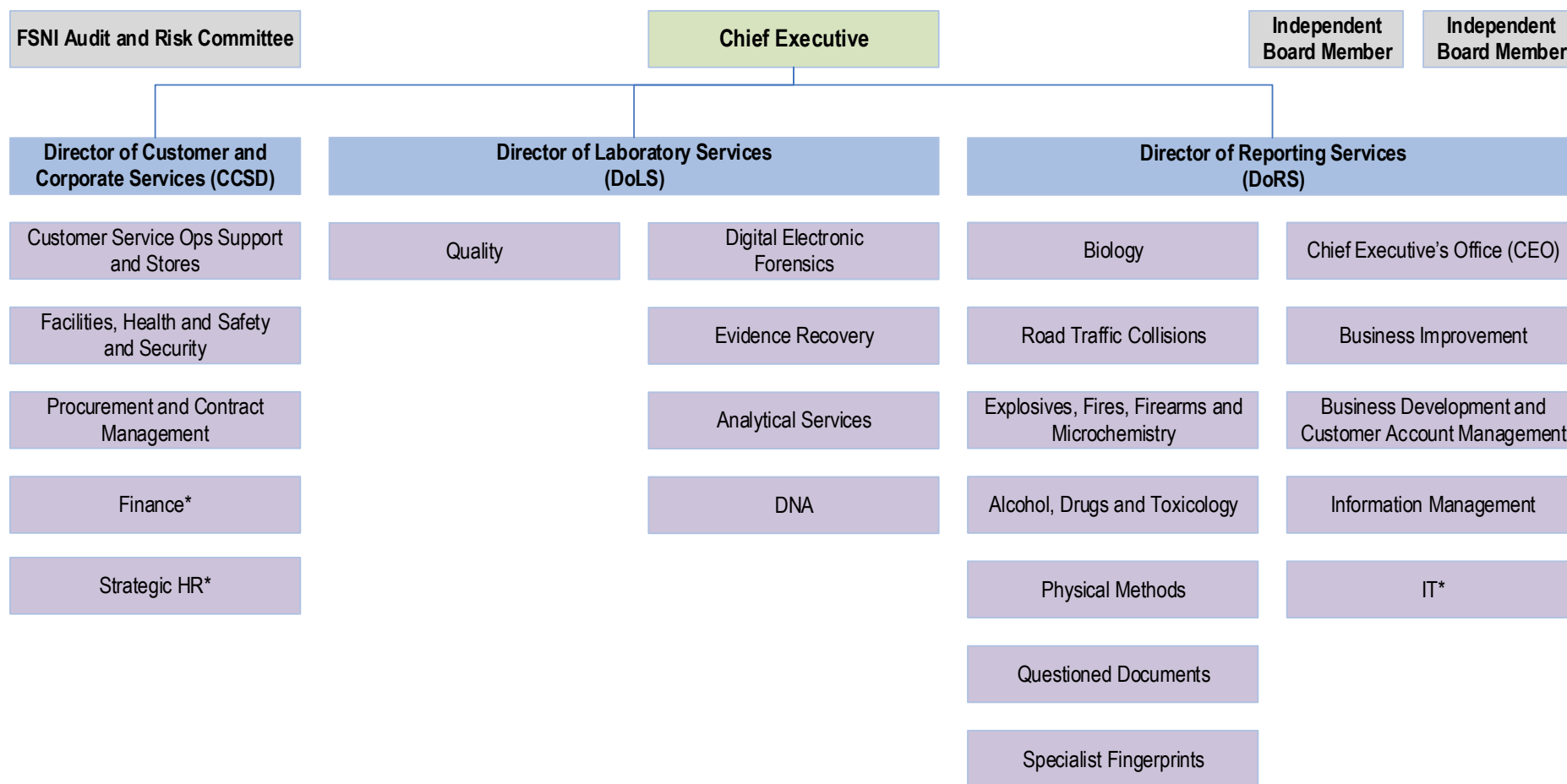
Organisation: An engaged workforce delivering a quality service (continued)

Ref	Lead	What will we do?	FSNI Strategic outcome
O1.12	CCSD	By 30 June 2021 to have completed a needs assessment and action plan for the current FSNI accommodation.	O3 Ensure accommodation and infrastructures meet our current and anticipated requirements
O1.13	CCSD/ DORS	By 30 September 2021 to have refreshed the Corporate Business Continuity Plan and ICT Disaster Recovery Plans	O3 Ensure accommodation and infrastructures meet our current and anticipated requirements
O1.14	CCSD	By 31 March 2022 to have completed a desktop exercise to test the FSNI Business Continuity Plan.	O3 Ensure accommodation and infrastructures meet our current and anticipated requirements
O1.15	CCSD	By 30 June 2021 to develop a 2021/22 Health and Safety (H&S) Action Plan	O3 Ensure accommodation and infrastructures meet our current and anticipated requirements
O1.16	CCSD	By 31 March 2022 to have delivered the in-year actions in the H&S Plan	O3 Ensure accommodation and infrastructures meet our current and anticipated requirements
O1.17	DORS	By 30 June 2021 to review and update the Information Assurance Action plan	O2 Develop and exploit effective line of business and MIS systems
O1.18	DORS	By 31 March 2022 to deliver in-year actions from the Information Assurance Action plan	O2 Develop and exploit effective line of business and MIS systems
O1.19	DORS	To ensure governance arrangements are in place and working effectively	O2 Develop and exploit effective line of business and MIS systems

Finance: Trusted, assured Corporate Governance demonstrating the value that forensic science brings to the Criminal Justice Sector (CJS)

Ref	Lead	What will we do?	FSNI Strategic outcome
F1.1	CCSD	To effectively represent FSNI funding requirements through Long Range Financial Plans aligning strategic plans to DoJ, PSNI and other funders, both resource and capital.	F1 Ensure adequate funding to support delivery of forensic science for NI
F1.2	CCSD	By 31 March 2022 to ensure no overspend and final outturn within 1% of final budget.	F2 Manage key resources of staff, non-staff and capital effectively
F1.3	CCSD	By 30 June 2021 to develop and agree principles and required MI for the FSNI Costing Model	F2 Manage key resources of staff, non-staff and capital effectively
F1.4	CCSD	By 30 November 2021 to have developed and tested a new costing model	F2 Manage key resources of staff, non-staff and capital effectively
F1.5	DORS	Understand the potential use for the Public Value Account and Scorecard	F1 Ensure adequate funding to support delivery of forensic science for NI

Annex B - FSNI Organisation Chart



* delivered through shared service facility



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