

News story: Continuing cuts to forensic science threaten criminal justice

In [the report](#), which was published today (Friday 19 January), Regulator Dr Gillian Tully warns that the cuts highlighted last year have continued in the sector, with serious consequences.

Already, scientists have been required to give expert advice based on interim forensic reports because some police forces have refused to pay for the scientists to produce an admissible statement of evidence in court. Often there is little time left for practitioners to prepare reports on complex cases or keep up with scientific developments.

At the same time, police are spending less on their own forensic science practices. With the tendering process for commercial services being focused heavily on costs, more and more money is taken out of the system.

Further pressure is being put on individual scientists by the delay of many organisations in starting the process of attaining the required quality standards, the Regulator states.

However, the Regulator also highlights that despite the challenges, significant progress has been made in the sector and that many organisations have achieved the required standards, or are well on their way to demonstrate objectively that their methods are scientifically valid and their staff competent.

Forensic Science Regulator Dr Gillian Tully said:

There are a lot of hard working and committed forensic scientists doing their best, but they are not always supported by the system they work in.

A year ago I warned that funding was too tight, and now even more money has been taken out of the system. We cannot continue on this path.

I urge the government to put the role of the Regulator on statutory footing now, to enable me to ensure that all organisations providing forensic science evidence in the criminal justice system, meet the high standards required.

The failure of some police forces to give sufficient priority to achieving quality standards in their own forensic science work, is of great concern to the Regulator. Whilst it is understandable that senior police leaders have a wide range of priorities, if quality cannot be sufficiently prioritised, it

may become unsustainable for some forces to continue to carry out their own forensic science case work.

The Regulator also highlighted that a number of small forensic businesses have chosen, for financial reasons, not to move towards reaching the required standards. For these reasons, statutory powers are urgently needed so that the Regulator can ensure that all providers of forensic science deliver work to quality standards that are fit for the criminal justice system.