

# News story: Forensic Science Regulator calls for statutory enforcement powers

The Forensic Science Regulator (FSR) has reiterated calls for statutory enforcement powers to ensure forensic providers and police forces in England and Wales meet quality standards, in her [annual report](#) published today (Friday).

Dr Gillian Tully has again urged the Home Office to put forward legislation to enable her to enforce quality standards. Currently the regulator sets the standards forensic science providers and police forces in England and Wales should meet but has no legal powers to enforce compliance, despite the government committing to introducing such powers in 2016.

The regulator's annual report also finds that dozens of police forces across England and Wales are making improvements in various areas of forensic science, including fingerprint comparison and areas such as crime scene examination and the extraction of data from digital devices.

However, she warned that both commercial forensic science providers and police forces in England and Wales are under financial strain, which represents a risk to the quality and sustainability of their work.

Forensic Science Regulator, Dr Gillian Tully, said:

Over the past year there has been progress in some areas by police in England and Wales but there is more work to be done to ensure all are adhering to internationally-recognised standards.

It is clear that the government must give this office the legal authority to enforce these standards and ensure the quality of forensic science continues to improve.

Dr Tully added that dozens of forces are now beginning to comply with fingerprint comparison standards. However, this follows an EU legal requirement to do so by March 25 2019 being brought into UK law. In October 2018 only 3 police forces in England and Wales had met the FSR's own non-legally binding deadline for fingerprint comparisons. She cited this as evidence of the need for statutory enforcement powers.

The FSR's annual report also updates on developments between November 2017 and November 2018 and priorities for the year to come. These include:

- the regulator's continued work to engage with those who influence policy and practice, including the Home Office and National Police Chiefs' Council, to highlight ways in which the quality of forensic science is

at risk and could be improved

- that forensic teams of police forces in England and Wales are insufficiently resourced to enable them to deliver operationally and achieve quality standards. In digital forensics the situation is even worse, where there are reports of police dropping cases because digital evidence is not available
- the letters the Regulator has written to the Chief Officers of 5 police forces requesting urgent action to ensure they use the latest contamination elimination database to avoid investigations being misled
- the publication for consultation of a draft quality standard for taking forensic samples from complainants in sex offence cases along with accompanying guidance
- an update to the latest regulator's codes of practice and conduct, which is due to be published in Spring 2019.