

QUESTION FROM PROFESSOR ADRIAN JAMES RE: FORENSIC WORK

Question

The outgoing forensic science regulator has stated that forensic toxicology work is having to be rationed because there isn't enough capacity for every police force to submit every sample that they'd like to submit.

Is the PCC satisfied that the current collaboration arrangements for forensic science work are meeting the needs of SYP, particularly in relation to road traffic toxicology work, and that offenders who are suspected of driving while under the influence of drugs are not avoiding prosecution as a consequence of any lack of capacity?

Response

South Yorkshire Police is in a regional collaboration with the Yath forces around forensic science services.

Toxicology samples (road traffic and crime) are submitted to an external company for examination. Nationally there is an issue around the capacity of suppliers of this service, with a national backlog of around 6500 samples for road traffic toxicology.

The delay in toxicology samples being analysed means longer periods after arrest and prior to any charge, meaning that individuals who have driven whilst under the influence of drugs are taking longer to appear before the courts.

There are concerns around cases being 'statute barred' if they are not processed in accordance with the time limitations, to date this has occurred with two cases nationally (neither of them SY cases). This is subject of close oversight at the RSSS to ensure we do not lose any cases due to time delays – any getting close are flagged.

Our suppliers are steadily increasing capacity and on a weekly basis we are being made aware of any additional capacity above our 'quota'.

The additional level of scrutiny and management does of course require time and effort, but with that in place we are able to provide the assurance needed.

END