THE SCOTTISH FINGERPRINT SERVICE
ACTION PLAN FOR EXCELLENCE

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CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chapter 1 sets out the remit which I have been given by the Minister for Justice, Cathy Jamieson MSP, and the remit of the panel of 3 leading fingerprint experts who have agreed to assist me in developing and implementing this Action Plan.

Chapter 2 summarises the previous inspections, reports and recommendations which have been made in respect of the Scottish Criminal Records Office (SCRO) and the SCRO Fingerprint Bureau since 2000; and explains that HMIC's recommendations and suggestions are to be re-visited to provide a baseline assessment of the current arrangements in place in the Scottish Fingerprint Service today.

Chapter 3 discusses standards and quality assurance issues in the Scottish Fingerprint Service and sets out proposals for improving training, accreditation and competency testing on a consistent basis across the Service.

Chapter 4 focuses on the practice and procedures of the four forensic science laboratories and makes proposals for improvements in their organisation and working practices.

Chapter 5 discusses the leadership and culture of the Scottish Fingerprint Service and sets out a series of proposals in relation to performance and personnel management, strategic planning, communication with staff and effective teamworking.

Chapter 6 focuses on improving communication and engagement with the Service's stakeholders.

Chapter 7 draws the various threads of this Action Plan together and sets out a clear vision of the way forward and the future of the Scottish Fingerprint Service as a confident, successful organisation delivering an excellent service to its stakeholders and partners in the Scottish criminal justice system and elsewhere.

Summary of Action Points

1   Sir David O'Dowd will consider the 25 recommendations and 20 suggestions made by HMIC in 2000; apply his experience and professional knowledge to make an assessment of the current situation following the changes introduced in the Scottish Fingerprint Service; and report his findings.

2   A baseline assessment of the Scottish Fingerprint Service will be informed by Sir David O'Dowd's assessment and advice from external practitioners.

3   A formal evaluation will be undertaken of both initial and refresher training delivered to fingerprint experts in the Scottish Fingerprint Service.

4   The Scottish Fingerprint Service's training and quality assurance manuals and external quality assurance assessments will be published as part of the organisation's publication scheme.

5   The criteria for achieving accreditation as a fingerprint expert in the Scottish Fingerprint Service will be benchmarked against that in place in England and Wales and also the international fingerprint community.

6   The support provided to staff eligible to apply to the National Council for Registration of Forensic Practitioners will be examined with a view to moving towards 100% registration.

7   Annual external competency testing will remain as a feature of the Scottish Fingerprint Service and the current provider will be tested against 'best in class' standards.

8   The verification process in use in the bureaux will be reviewed to bring about a consistent identification system throughout Scotland. This process will draw on expertise from outwith Scotland.

9   ACPOS agreement will be sought to the integration of scenes of crime examiners into the Scottish Forensic Science Service.

10   A Scientific Advisory Group will be established to consider how fingerprint examination and DNA analysis can be more formally linked to secure best evidence. This Group will report its findings drawing on international knowledge in this field.

11   The benefits of developing joint fingerprint/forensic submission units in at least the four locations with bureaux/laboratories will be considered.

12   The non-numeric fingerprint standard will be introduced to the Scottish Fingerprint Service by the end of August 2006.

13   Full implementation of Ident 1 across Scotland will be completed by July 2007.

14   An appropriate leadership competency framework will be developed and implemented.

15   A stand-alone corporate strategic plan will be developed. It will be informed by wide consultation, reflect agreed values and priorities and be directly aligned to the organisation's performance management framework and related processes.

16   A collaborative vision and set of key values for the organisation will be developed and validated. It will clearly demonstrate the value of the individual and how he or she personally contributes to the organisation's overall objectives.

17   A corporate communications strategy will be developed and established which engages staff, both formally and informally, facilitates dialogue and faces outwards towards the organisation's stakeholders.

18   A team-based culture focused on improving performance delivery and excellence will be established.

19   An appropriate career framework will be developed and implemented.

20   An effective attendance policy for the Scottish Fingerprint Service will be introduced.

21   A change to move current structures to an inclusive and single organisation will be initiated.

22   A staff 'safeline' will be established together with suitable internal forums for the resolution of difficult or contentious issues as an integral part of the culture-building strand of the change management process.

23   A comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan will be published.

24   An ethical contract for both the Scottish Fingerprint Service and Scottish Forensic Science Service will be developed for incorporation into the new organisation.

25   Experts with an international perspective in a range of disciplines including fingerprint examination, human resources, organisational development and the law will be engaged to support the development and implementation of the Action Plan for Excellence and will be given the opportunity to comment on it.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The misidentification of a fingerprint as Shirley McKie's in 1997 has understandably caused considerable public concern ever since about the quality of the work done by fingerprint experts in Scotland – an issue which is central to maintaining public confidence in the Scottish criminal justice system. The purpose of this Action Plan is not to rehearse or review the facts of the Shirley McKie case itself, but to consider its implications for the Scottish Fingerprint Service which will be established as part of a new national Scottish Forensic Science Service on 1 April 2007.

1.2 Much good work has already been done to take the Scottish Fingerprint Service forward. The purpose of this Action Plan for Excellence is to take stock of the Scottish Fingerprint Service as it is today and to identify Action Points to develop the organisation for the future. The objective, which I am convinced is both realistic and attainable, is to ensure that the Scottish Fingerprint Service adheres to the best possible international standards and is a recognised centre of excellence in its field.

Remit

1.3 The Minister for Justice, Cathy Jamieson MSP, announced in a statement to Parliament on 22 February 2006 that:

> *"I have today instructed the interim Chief Executive of the Scottish Police Services Authority, Deputy Chief Constable David Mulhern, to bring forward by the end of March an action plan to develop the Scottish Fingerprint Service as an integrated part of the new Scottish Forensic Science Service from April 2007. In preparing his action plan, Deputy Chief Constable Mulhern will draw on the best available scientific advice and expertise in organisational development and human resource management. I will make his plan available to Parliament and I will keep Parliament informed of his work over the next year."*

1.4 Three leading international fingerprint experts have agreed to assist me in developing and implementing this Action Plan: Bruce Grant, the Head of Counter Terrorism Forensic Services in the Metropolitan Police; Danny Greathouse, from the Department of Homeland Security in the United States of America; and Arie Zeelenberg, Senior Fingerprints Adviser of the Dutch National Police. Graham C Bell QC, a senior Advocate, has also agreed to assist me by providing a legal perspective on the Action Plan. I will also be supported by David Fisher, Group Director HR in HBOS, and Gary Kildare, Vice President HR Northern Europe with IBM, to address the human resources and organisational development challenges that this Action Plan presents. Finally, I have sought the assistance of Sir David O'Dowd, who served as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary for England and Wales from 1996 to 2001, to provide an assessment of the way in which previous HMIC recommendations have been implemented. I am convinced that their support and guidance will ensure that swift and decisive progress is made over the coming 12 months.

1.5   The remit of the experts is to provide:

- An expert view of current processes within the Scottish Fingerprint Service and to validate them as good practice or otherwise

- A high level assessment of the Scottish Fingerprint Service and an indication of what areas should be prioritised within the Action Plan; and for advice on the appropriateness of the Action Plan and the main components within it

- Advice on best contemporary practice within the science of Fingerprints

- An examination of and commentary on developing and developed strands of the Action Plan

- Guidance and advice on structure, policy and procedure within the Scottish Fingerprint Service.

2.   BACKGROUND

2.1   Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary (HMIC) completed a Primary Inspection of the Scottish Criminal Record Office (SCRO) Fingerprint Bureau in 2000 and made 25 recommendations and 20 suggestions for change. In October 2000, the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland (ACPOS) established a Presidential Review Group to co-ordinate the response of the Scottish Police Service to the HMIC finding that the SCRO Fingerprint Bureau was not efficient and effective. To take the work of the Presidential Review Group forward, ACPOS created a Change Management Review Team to undertake a 90 day scrutiny of the SCRO Fingerprint Bureau.

2.2   Between them, the HMIC Primary Inspection of 2000, the ACPOS Presidential Review Group and the Change Management Review Team made over 130 recommendations, suggestions and findings. By May 2001, the project management team established by ACPOS to pursue the issues raised by the various reports was able to hand over responsibility to SCRO management for final implementation of the remaining 20 issues, the others having been discharged. In the next Primary Inspection of SCRO in 2004, HMIC discharged the remaining eight recommendations and five suggestions that were outstanding from their Review of the SCRO Fingerprint Bureau the previous year.

Recent developments

2.3   As a result of this unparalleled scrutiny of a policing organisation in Scotland, the way in which the Scottish Fingerprint Service operates in 2006 has changed dramatically since 2000. To provide a baseline assessment of the current working arrangements in place in the Scottish Fingerprint Service today, the starting point for this Action Plan is to revisit the 25 recommendations and 20 suggestions made by HMIC in its Primary Inspection Report of the SCRO Fingerprint Bureau in 2000. Only by considering the issues raised and changes already implemented is it possible to assess where the Scottish Fingerprint Service is today and what further action is needed to provide a world class service.

2.4   To bring an informed and impartial assessment of the discharge and implementation of change following the various recommendations and suggestions made by HMIC in 2000, I invited Sir David O'Dowd, who served as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary for England and Wales from 1996 to 2001, to assist in the development of the Action Plan by re-visiting HMIC's 25 recommendations and 20 suggestions and to provide a current assessment of the position, given the passage of time and the opportunity this presents to evaluate the changes already introduced in the Scottish Fingerprint Service.

> **ACTION POINT 1**
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> **Sir David O'Dowd will consider the 25 recommendations and 20 suggestions made by HMIC in 2000; apply his experience and professional knowledge to make an assessment of the current situation following the changes introduced in the Scottish Fingerprint Service; and report his findings.**

2.5 The outcome of Sir David's work will then be used to examine current practice in the Scottish Fingerprint Service and test this against the other strands of the Action Plan to provide a benchmark assessment of the organisation today. The examination of current practice will be informed by external practitioners in the coming months. Sir David O'Dowd's assessment together with the examination of current practice in operation will provide a robust baseline assessment of the Scottish Fingerprint Service and a clear basis for moving forward.

ACTION POINT 2

A baseline assessment of the Scottish Fingerprint Service will be informed by Sir David O'Dowd's assessment and advice from external practitioners.

3 STANDARDS AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

3.1 Since 2000, the Scottish Fingerprint Service has effectively reviewed its entire operating practice, procedures and training, all of which are now underpinned by a series of manuals. These are:

• Procedures Manual	details the procedures applied within the four bureaux (the ongoing value of this particular document will be assessed over the next 12 months)
• Quality Assurance Manual	defines the policies in relation to ISO 9001
• Quality Procedures Manual	defines the style of quality procedures and controls their issue and amendment
• Common Training Policy	details the training process and roles of training staff as regards the Common Training Programme
• Common Training Programme	outlines the four-stage programme of development from the induction of a trainee examiner to authorisation as a fingerprint expert.

Training and Quality Assurance

3.2 At present there are six dedicated training staff in the Scottish Fingerprint Service, three of whom are based in the Glasgow Bureau and one in each of the other three bureaux. At a national level, the training staff comprises a Training Manager who co-ordinates, manages and develops the training function across the four bureaux and a Training Co-ordinator, who collates and maintains personal training records for all staff and provides administrative support. Both the Training Manager and Co-ordinator are based in the Glasgow Bureau. In each of the four bureaux there is a Training Officer who delivers practical, skills based training locally and also informs national training policy and design. In the Glasgow Bureau, the Training Officer is a dedicated post. In the three remaining bureaux the Training Officer also act as the Quality Assurance Officer, whose role is described at paragraph 3.5 below.

3.3 Since September 2003 a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Programme focusing on refresher training has been in place for all experts within the Scottish Fingerprint Service. This includes training on skills development in terms of practical comparison skills, law and legislation updates and court skills. The week-long CPD Programme is held annually and every fingerprint expert attends such a course at least once every 3 years.

3.4   There has been no formal comprehensive evaluation (including an assessment of impact on personal and organisational performance) of CPD refresher training since its introduction in 2003.

> **ACTION POINT 3**
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> **A formal evaluation will be undertaken of both initial and refresher training delivered to fingerprint experts in the Scottish Fingerprint Service.**

3.5   In Glasgow there is a dedicated Quality Assurance Officer, while in the other three bureaux this post is also responsible for the delivery of training. The Quality Assurance Officer audits the processes and procedures in place in the Scottish Fingerprint Service and ensures compliance with the standards laid out in the Scottish Fingerprint Service Quality Manual.

3.6   The Scottish Fingerprint Service has been ISO 9001 accredited since August 2005. Prior to this, each bureau held ISO 9001 accreditation on a stand-alone basis, with the Glasgow Bureau achieving accreditation in 2000 and the others in 2004. The ISO 9001 standard is internationally recognised and based on customer satisfaction, continuous improvement and the development of a common process-based quality management system. ISO 9001 is externally re-accredited by triennial re-inspection of the operation of the procedures and regimes specified in the Scottish Fingerprint Service Quality Procedures Manual which covers management responsibilities, resource management, product realisation (design and development, purchase, production and service provision etc) and measurement, analysis and improvement.

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> **ACTION POINT 4**
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> **The Scottish Fingerprint Service's training and quality assurance manuals and external quality assessments will be published as part of the organisation's publication scheme.**

Accreditation to Expert Status

3.7   Historically, accreditation to expert status as a fingerprint expert was based on duration in post rather than formal assessments of competence, which in practice led to accreditation after five years' experience. In January 2003, Scottish Executive Justice Department Police Circular No 1/2003 endorsed and formalised arrangements for authorising fingerprint experts on competence-based criteria as opposed to time-based criteria. This system of accreditation is now used not only in the Scottish Fingerprint Service, but also in England and Wales.

3.8   Trainee fingerprint officers complete a structured four-phase programme of training and assessment, which is outlined in the Scottish Fingerprint Service Common Training Programme, before being authorised as fingerprint experts. Three of the four stages involve attendance and assessment at the National Training Centre for Scientific Support to Criminal Investigation, which is run by Centrex in Durham. The stage that does not involve attendance at the National Training Centre is quality-assured by it. On average, authorisation takes around four years.

ACTION POINT 5

The criteria for achieving accreditation as a fingerprint expert in the Scottish Fingerprint Service will be benchmarked against that in place in England and Wales and also the international fingerprint community.

Scrutiny and Oversight

3.9   The operational performance and governance of the Scottish Fingerprint Service is scrutinised by the Common Police Services (CPS) Programme Board, which comprises three Chief Constables, three Conveners of Police Authorities and three senior officials of the Scottish Executive.

3.10   The Director of SCRO, who is accountable for the Scottish Fingerprint Service, attends meetings of the CPS Programme Board to report on performance. The Director also presents Annual and Corporate Plans to the Board for approval and carries out the instructions of the Board in respect of operational policy, priorities, spending decisions and service standards. With the establishment of the Scottish Police Services Authority (SPSA) on 1 April 2007, governance of the Scottish Fingerprint Service will pass to the Board of the Authority, which will have lay members as well as members who are Chief Constables and Police Authority Conveners. Operational management will be overseen by the Chief Executive of SPSA, but given effect by the management arrangements that will be put in place by the new Scottish Forensic Science Service and the modern management structures that will emerge from the implementation of this Action Plan.

3.11   In line with the formal inspection arrangements for police forces in Scotland, HMIC undertakes Primary Inspections of SCRO and its component services, including the Scottish Fingerprint Service. Inspection reports are submitted to Scottish Ministers and published as public documents together with relevant recommendations and suggestions for improvement.

3.12   Further scrutiny and oversight at a practitioner level is provided by the National Council for Registration of Forensic Practitioners, which is a professional regulatory body that maintains a register of currently competent forensic practitioners, and has over 2,000 members from a number of forensic disciplines. Registration is by application and requires applicants to submit details of their career, qualifications, training and recent casework. Examples of casework are selected for detailed scrutiny and assessment. The emphasis for registration is current competency and members have to undertake revalidation every four years.

3.13 Registration is voluntary and the Scottish Fingerprint Service has provided positive support to staff to achieve registration, through funding and time to prepare the portfolio of evidence required. Currently 86% of the Scottish Fingerprint Service experts are accredited or are undertaking the application process. The Service is the only organisation in the Council which achieves this level of registration.

ACTION POINT 6

The support provided to staff eligible to apply to the National Council for Registration of Forensic Practitioners will be examined with a view to moving towards 100% registration.

Competency Testing

3.14 Since 2002, all fingerprint experts in the Scottish Fingerprint Service are required to undertake annual competency testing by Collaborative Testing Services (CTS), whose main function is to undertake such competency validation work. CTS is an independent American company which provides this service to laboratories in 35 countries, but is most widely used in the USA. No other fingerprint bureau in the United Kingdom currently uses an external organisation to test the competency of fingerprint experts annually, although the National Fingerprint Board for England and Wales is currently considering the Scottish Fingerprint Service model.

ACTION POINT 7

Annual external competency testing will remain as a feature of the Scottish Fingerprint Service and the current provider will be tested against 'best in class' standards.

Identification/Verification Process

3.15 Following the initial identification of a fingerprint mark, the process of peer review is central to the verification process. In the Glasgow Bureau, this involves a second expert conducting independent analysis and comparison of the mark and fingerprint record without knowledge of the identity of the expert who first examined the mark nor access to his or her working notes or papers. Following this, a further level of verification is undertaken by a stand-alone Verification Unit, which has no knowledge of the identity of either the examiner initially identifying the mark or the first-level verifier. Outside Glasgow, while independent verification is applied, the smaller scale of the bureaux means that anonymity cannot be achieved.

ACTION POINT 8

The verification process in use in the bureaux will be reviewed to bring about a consistent identification system throughout Scotland. This process will draw on expertise from outwith Scotland.

4   FORENSIC ISSUES

Process engineering

4.1   The four forensic laboratories in Scotland currently operate as separate, stand-alone units delivering a service to one or more Scottish Police Forces. One of the purposes of the Police, Public Order and Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill is to provide for the development and provision of a new national forensic science service. This will be achieved by bringing together the four current laboratories into a single service under its own Director and standardising the practices, processes and procedures which each of the laboratories has developed.

4.2   The Scottish Fingerprint Service also operates out of four geographical locations, three of which are co-located with the scene of crime department or the forensic laboratory. Only the Glasgow Fingerprint Bureau occupies separate premises.

Evidence Recovery to Identification

4.3   The examination of marks found at crime scenes or otherwise associated with a crime is part of an extended process involving a series of different individuals with particular and often unique skill sets. The end-to-end process effectively involves the recovery of a mark or impression, which is subjected to a number of processes intended to identify its owner. Those involved include the crime scene examiner who will recover the mark, the fingerprint examiner who will compare it against the fingerprint database, and the forensic scientist who may use DNA technology to identify the 'owner'. These processes illustrate the direct relationship between the various experts and the requirement for an extremely close understanding of one anothers' roles.

4.4   To provide greater continuity between the above disciplines, it is proposed that all three groups should operate within a single structure in order to streamline and improve the processes for identifying or eliminating those who may be associated with a crime. The integration of the Scottish Fingerprint Service with the Scottish Forensic Science Service will provide two elements of this synergy: however, it is vital that scenes of crime examiners should also be included as their function is the critical link in the evidence recovery process. Consultation is ongoing with ACPOS to bring scenes of crime examiners into the Scottish Forensic Science Service and this integration is an important element for creating not only a world class fingerprint service for Scotland, but a world class forensic science service for Scotland.

> **ACTION POINT 9**
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> **ACPOS agreement will be sought to the integration of scenes of crime examiners into the Scottish Forensic Science Service.**

Relationship between DNA and Fingerprints

4.5   Notwithstanding the proximity of three of the four fingerprint bureaux in Scotland to the laboratories with which they work, there are currently no formal practices in place between the bureaux and the forensic science laboratories which carry out DNA analysis. Given that a fingerprint mark is effectively sweat that has been left behind, and given the huge advancements in recent years with DNA, there is real potential for increasing identifications by subjecting recovered marks to DNA analysis. Some work along these lines is taking place between the Glasgow Fingerprint Bureau and the Glasgow Forensic Science Laboratory, although on a fairly 'ad hoc' basis. Greater focus on this area could significantly enhance the impact that fingerprints and DNA have on criminal investigations.

4.6   The creation of scientific advisory groups, dedicated to specific and discrete areas of science, has been proven to bring about advances in the forensic science environment and is capable of being introduced across the dual discipline of fingerprints and DNA. Such groups in the main comprise practitioners from police laboratories, often working in collaboration with UK academic institutions.

> **ACTION POINT 10**
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> **A Scientific Advisory Group will be established to consider how fingerprint examination and DNA analysis can be more formally linked to secure best evidence. This Group will report its findings drawing on international knowledge in this field.**

Fingerprint/Forensic Submissions Units

4.7   As a concept, the submissions unit is not yet a feature in Scotland. Effectively, such a unit is designed to introduce an extra element of evaluation into the process between the submission by operational officers of evidence for analysis and the fingerprint bureau or laboratory. This allows an assessment of the value of further analysis of the evidence by a fingerprint expert or forensic scientist. Moreover, current practice leaves determination of the destination of evidence between fingerprint and forensic examination to the operational officer or scenes of crime examiner, without assessing the potential value of directing the examination to whichever discipline is most capable of exploiting the trace evidence to identify an individual. A joint fingerprint/forensic submissions unit would bring a degree of expertise to this decision-making process, based on knowledge rather than chance.

4.8   The development of joint submissions units is a matter that should be considered for introduction in the fingerprint/forensic fields.

> **ACTION POINT 11**
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> **The benefits of developing joint fingerprint/forensic submission units in at least the four locations with bureaux/laboratories will be considered.**

Non-numeric Fingerprint Standard

4.9   The non-numeric fingerprint standard was introduced in England and Wales in 2001 and moves away from the previous standard that was based on the 16 Points of Comparison in sequence and agreement, a standard outlined in Home Office Guidelines of 1953. The non-numeric standard is seen as being much more definitive, with the fingerprint expert considering the mark or impression holistically and satisfying himself or herself that there are enough characteristics to conclude that the mark can be identified as that of an individual.

4.10   The Scottish Fingerprint Service still relies on the 16 Points of Comparison standard, despite moves dating back to 2001 to move to a non-numeric standard. In the Third Year Review of the SCRO Fingerprint Bureau in 2003, HMIC acknowledged an intention to introduce the non-numeric standard to the Scottish Fingerprint Service the following year.

4.11   The non-numeric standard has still not been introduced in Scotland. There is no good reason for further delay in introducing the new standard in Scotland and the Scottish Fingerprint Service has completed the necessary training, as well as making changes to procedures and practice to allow its early introduction. It is understood that the only remaining issue is that of communication of the change with stakeholders in the criminal justice community. The challenge of shifting to the non-numeric standard should now be grasped and it should be introduced without further delay.

> **ACTION POINT 12**
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> **The non-numeric fingerprint standard will be introduced to the Scottish Fingerprint Service by the end of August 2006.**

IDENT 1/ Automatic Fingerprint Recognition (AFR) Terminals

4.12   At present all fingerprint records taken from individuals and retained on file (known as "10 Prints records") are held on a computerised database, which allows automatic comparison against marks recovered from crime scenes. The Automatic Fingerprint Recognition (AFR) System identifies 10 Prints held on the system which have similarities to the mark in question. A fingerprint expert then physically examines the images against the mark to establish identification.

4.13   Until now, there has been no facility for the electronic capture of palm prints from individuals and no developed means for comparing prints held on paper copy against marks recovered. As some 20% of marks recovered are believed to be from palms, this is a significant missed opportunity for identification.

4.14   Ident 1 has been in development for several years, partly to address the potential for palm print capture and comparison. This will not only create the opportunity to capture palm prints from individuals electronically and allow their electronic comparison with marks recovered from crime scenes, it will also for the first time create a UK database of some 6.5 million '10 Prints', as well as around 2 million marks recovered from crime scenes.

4.15   To facilitate the electronic capture of palm prints, the electronic fingerprint capture machines (Livescan) currently located in all Scottish Police Forces are in the process of being replaced with more modern terminals which are also capable of electronically reading and capturing palm prints. This system is known as Ident 1. The contract for replacement of these Livescan machines and Automated Search System was awarded in 2004, and the project is scheduled for completion by July 2007. Ident 1 involves an investment of some £1.7m per year over the eight years of the contract.

   ACTION POINT 13

   Full implementation of Ident 1 across Scotland will be completed by July 2007.

5. MODERN WORKFORCE AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership

5.1 The prospects of success for this Action Plan are inextricably linked to the quality of leadership that exists and can be developed within the Scottish Fingerprint Service.

5.2 All staff with leadership responsibility within the organisation, particularly senior managers, must be able to demonstrate the capacity and capability to drive and guide the Scottish Fingerprint Service through significant change. The focus must be on critically reviewing current service provision, establishing, along with others, the best possible operating model for the future and successfully delivering a change agenda towards a 21st century service. The leaders of the service must know what competencies and skills are required and must be prepared in due course to be assessed against a competency framework. Any skills gaps that are identified should be addressed through a development programme, tailored to individual needs. This requires standardisation of the performance review regime across the organisation, and a movement away from localised assessment models.

5.3 The Head of the Service must be able to:

- represent the views of the service in the change agenda

- lead the cultural change required to eradicate lack of corporacy

- bring consistency of good practice to the operation of the Scottish Fingerprint Service

- work collaboratively with key stakeholders to ensure successful implementation of this Action Plan.

5.4 Most crucially, the Head of the Scottish Fingerprint Service must lead the organisation so as to secure and retain the confidence of its staff, partners and stakeholders. The Head of Service must have the capability to lead, inspire and represent the four bureaux as one successful team, able to deliver excellence in all areas and command public confidence and esteem.

ACTION POINT 14

An appropriate leadership competency framework will be developed and implemented.

5.5 All effective organisations need clear direction. In part this is delivered through effective leadership, but just as importantly it is signposted by explicit objectives and well articulated strategies. To develop a common purpose within the organisation, staff in the four bureaux should have an equal opportunity to be involved in the development of the organisation's objectives and strategies. These should thereafter be accessible and transparent and linked directly to individual performance objectives and reflected in the performance measurement and management regime, both on an individual and organisational basis.

5.6 The Scottish Fingerprint Service must have a robust, comprehensive and ethical corporate performance regime that identifies the critical areas of business delivery, sets realistically stretching targets and constantly measures itself to improve understanding of performance and hold the leadership team to account.

ACTION POINT 15

A stand-alone corporate strategic plan will be developed. It will be informed by wide consultation, reflect agreed values and priorities and be directly aligned to the organisation's performance management framework and related processes.

Motivation and Engagement

5.7 Similarly, the vision and values of the organisation should be developed with the active involvement of staff and key stakeholders. This will assist the development of clarity and a sense of purpose around the role and responsibility of each individual member of the team in delivering the vision and values of the organisation. As the Scottish Fingerprint Service moves forward under the Scottish Forensic Science Service there is a need to ensure that the vision and key values of the wider organisation are understood and supported.

ACTION POINT 16

A collaborative vision and set of key values for the organisation will be developed and validated. It will clearly demonstrate the value of the individual and how he or she personally contributes to the organisation's overall objectives.

5.8 As with all change management processes, good communication is essential to those directly engaged in and affected by the change. Such communication is of fundamental importance to both the staff and others with an interest in the nature of the change and its possible outcomes. At its core, good communications during change should not be focused solely on providing information about what is happening. To be effective, communication has to be based on dialogue, be about discussion not dictation, asking questions not just providing answers, and persuading not compelling. Leaders need to occupy a lead position in the communications strategy, not least as it should provide the means by which they can come to understand and be sensitive to the feelings and beliefs of people within and outwith the organisation who are affected by the change that is occurring.

ACTION POINT 17

A corporate communications strategy will be developed and established which engages staff, both formally and informally, facilitates dialogue and faces outward towards the organisation's stakeholders.

Performance Framework

5.9   All leading modern organisations have a performance focus. In the public sector this is associated with delivering best value and providing benefit to customers. Underpinning this is the need for organisations to develop a performance-based team culture. To achieve this outcome, organisations must be prepared to embrace new thinking on how teams are composed and how they function. Given the current geographical separation of the four bureaux, it is particularly important for the organisation to harness technology in developing a team ethos.

> **ACTION POINT 18**
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> **A team-based culture focused on improving performance delivery and excellence will be established.**

Staff

5.10   A fair, open, transparent and structured career framework is required if the aspirations for the Scottish Fingerprint Service are to be realised. Positive steps to achieve this have already been taken – the move to criteria-based qualification for expert status, as opposed to time-based criteria, is the most obvious example. To build on this, competence and demonstrable ability need to be rewarded and the best and most able must be allowed to move to their natural level in the organisation, unfettered by outdated concepts, procedures or practices.

5.11   To be effective and satisfying, career development does not, however, always need to be vertical. Everyone in the Scottish Fingerprint Service must have a rewarding and challenging work environment where, in exchange for their contribution to the organisation, they are subject to a duty of care and receive respect and a sense of being valued.

> **ACTION POINT 19**
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> **An appropriate career framework will be developed and implemented.**

5.12   The well-being of an organisation can often be measured through the level of sickness in its staff. Excellent organisations are led by managers who are able to recognise the factors that impact on the health and wellbeing of individuals within the workplace and develop balanced strategies to address them positively. The reasons for absence are numerous and their relationship to one another extremely complex. While short-term fluctuations in absence rates are common in organisations, long-term trends are a telling indicator of organisational health. Sustained high levels of absence that are consistently above the sector norm represent a failure to manage problems and create a work environment that is not balancing the needs and interests of the organisation and the individual.

5.13   There is a marked difference between absence levels in the Glasgow Bureau compared with the other three bureaux. Some attribute this to the level of scrutiny, particularly by the media, experienced by the Glasgow Bureau as a result of the Shirley McKie case. It has, however, been almost nine years since the misidentification occurred, seven years since Shirley McKie's acquittal and almost six years since this issue was addressed by HMIC. There are not only particularly high levels of sickness in the Glasgow Bureau, it also seems that approaches to the monitoring of absence across the four bureaux differ. This latter aspect is inappropriate in what is a single organisation and makes the collation of consistent performance data in this area unnecessarily complex.

ACTION POINT 20

An effective attendance policy for the Scottish Fingerprint Service will be introduced.

Organisational Structure

5.14   Along with other issues, levels of staff absence highlight the need to revisit the organisational structure of Scottish Fingerprint Service. In its 2000 Report, HMIC recommended that a centralised model for a national fingerprint service should be considered. In its 2004 Report, HMIC returned to the issue, commenting that the four bureaux structure, with Glasgow being significantly larger than the other three, lacked cohesion and the appearance of a single organisation. These deficiencies in structure remain today and immediate steps need to be taken to improve the sense of corporacy around the organisation as a single entity rather than the sense of four disparate bureaux that prevails.

5.15   In moving forward on structural issues, the integration with the Scottish Forensic Science Service in April 2007 offers opportunities to change structures, but also requires great care to ensure that the Scottish Fingerprint Service does not see itself being diluted in terms of corporate identity through absorption into a new larger structure. Before integration in 2007, significant work is needed to bring the Scottish Fingerprint Service together and instil pride in all its staff.

ACTION POINT 21

A change to move current structures to an inclusive and single organisation will be initiated.

Cultural Change

5.16   The lack of corporate identity within the Scottish Fingerprint Service can in part be attributed to the current four bureaux structure and also the predominance of the Glasgow Bureau and its proximity to SCRO. In practice, this issue has manifested itself in a number of ways, including the willingness of individual bureaux to criticise each other in public and the sense of alienation of the smaller bureaux from the programme of change that is underway already. This progression of discord, and inter-bureau tension, makes the building of a common corporate culture, to which every member of staff feels able to subscribe, a matter of critical importance.

5.17 No part of this culture change should involve any attempt to suppress the legitimate expression of opinion. Opportunities to express opinions and, if need be, resolve conflicts, must be created and supported. Crucial to this is the establishment of a support regime for staff who are experiencing difficulties in relation to the culture of the organisation or who, in extreme cases, may believe that they have uncovered or witnessed wrong-doing. Many police forces and other organisations have subscribed to confidential 'safelines', which staff can telephone to seek advice or report matters of concern anonymously, if they prefer. Such confidential helplines are in the main remote from the organisation itself and are freely accessible and widely promoted to staff.

ACTION POINT 22

A staff 'safeline' will be established together with suitable internal forums for the resolution of difficult or contentious issues as an integral part of the culture-building strand of the change management process.

6. INFORMING THE CHANGE

6.1   The success or otherwise of any significant change programme is dependent on a range of factors, but foremost among them are issues of communication and engagement. The integration of the Scottish Fingerprint Service with a yet to be created Scottish Forensic Science Service creates a huge number of challenges. Not only is there the real concern of staff within the Scottish Fingerprint Service that they will merely be consumed by the larger and more diverse discipline of forensic science, but they are currently an organisation that has been under intense public scrutiny for several years. Consequently, it is essential that staff and public alike are reassured that the process will not only be inclusive, but will also bring about improvement.

6.2   Implementation of this Action Plan must be informed by a wide consultation, stakeholder engagement and expert advice. Individuals with an interest in the Scottish Fingerprint Service must feel they have access and the opportunity to express their views about the future shape and character of the organisation. Given its key importance to the criminal justice system and its public profile, the relevant stakeholder group is large and includes those involved in law enforcement, including police forces, the Scottish Executive, Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, the courts, members of the legal profession and, crucially, the Scottish public.

6.3   Although the span of the stakeholder group is large, it is not unmanageable provided proper analysis of it underpins a comprehensive and effective engagement strategy.

ACTION POINT 23

A comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan will be published.

6.4   The restoration of public confidence in the Scottish Fingerprint Service is crucial. In this regard the public includes not only individuals in our communities, but also those institutions that are stakeholders in the criminal justice system. Everyone has a right to expect that the organisation will act properly and this can best be demonstrated through a code of corporate ethics, which is clearly articulated, widely accepted and subscribed to and open to scrutiny. This code of corporate ethics should be underpinned by an ethical contract.

6.5   This approach should also be pursued by the Scottish Forensic Science Service.

ACTION POINT 24

An ethical contract for both the Scottish Fingerprint Service and Scottish Forensic Science Service will be developed for incorporation into the new organisation.

6.6   To ensure that the widest possible experience is used to inform the integration strategy of the Scottish Forensic Science Service, several experts of international repute from a range of disciplines have been identified to support the implementation of the Action Plan. This group will consider the proposals, comment on progress and apply their experience to the issue. Through this, the Action Plan will be guided and informed by impartial experts in their field who will provide critical as well as supportive input over the next 12 months.

ACTION POINT 25

Experts with an international perspective in a range of disciplines including fingerprint examination, human resources, organisational development and the law will be engaged to support the development and implementation of the Action Plan for Excellence and will be given the opportunity to comment on it.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1   This Action Plan aims to accelerate the process of change which has had such a positive impact on the Scottish Fingerprint Service in recent years. It is, therefore, necessarily ambitious and presents a number of significant challenges to the organisation and its staff. The outcomes to be achieved by the Action Points need to be realised and are essential to future success.

7.2   Framing the plan in this way is, in effect, an expression of confidence in the Scottish Fingerprint Service, and particularly in its staff who are committed to deliver the highest level of service on a daily basis. The same staff have consistently demonstrated their willingness to embrace change and improvement as the means of recapturing the high professional and public standing and esteem they once enjoyed.

7.3   The ingredients for success are assembled, the Scottish Fingerprint Service has improved and is keen to improve further. Experts in fingerprints, forensic science, human resources, organisational development and the legal profession will be active participants in the change process. The principles of project management will be applied to all stages of the plan with, at its core, a single, consistent strategic oversight of progress. In addition, the implementation of the Action Plan will be characterised by openness, transparency and accountability. The Plan will create high expectations, not least in the public mind, and it is intended that all interested parties will be able to see those expectations being realised.

Profile of the Scottish Fingerprint Service

1.   The Scottish Fingerprint Service provides a national fingerprint identification service and maintains the national fingerprint and palm print collection. The Service also provides expert witnesses and a national scene of crime mark search facility.

2.   The Scottish Fingerprint Service is currently a component of SCRO, which is a common police service providing, in addition to fingerprints, intelligence support, criminal justice information, IT and disclosure services to the criminal justice community.

3.   The current four bureaux national structure, with facilities in Glasgow, Aberdeen, Dundee and Edinburgh was established in 2001, following HMIC's Primary Inspection of the SCRO Fingerprint Bureau in 2000. Before this Scottish Police Forces maintained seven largely autonomous fingerprint bureaux, with Strathclyde Police providing a fingerprint capability for Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary. In addition to the rationalisation of bureaux, a Head of the Scottish Fingerprint Service was appointed in 2001. This individual also serves as Head of the Glasgow Fingerprint Bureau based within SCRO.

4.   The staffing structure of the Scottish Fingerprint Service is outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1

	Glasgow*	Aberdeen*	Dundee*	Edinburgh*
Head/ Deputy of Bureau	2	1	1	1
Quality Assurance Officer	1	1	1	1
Principal Fingerprint Officer	5	1		
Senior Fingerprint Officer	6.5		2	1
Training Manager	1			
Training Officer	0			
Training Coordinator	1			
Experts	28.8	10	6	7
Senior Tenprint Ident Officer	5			
Tenprint Ident Officer	15			
Fingerprint Clerk	16.5			
Administrative Assistant	3	1	1	1
IDENT 1 Project	2			
TOTAL	**86.8**	**14**	**11**	**11**

* actual establishment as of January 2006