



Creating a safer
Cambridgeshire

To: Business Coordination Board

From: Chief Constable

Date: 28 October 2020

FORENSIC COLLISION INVESTIGATION NETWORK SECTION 22A AGREEMENT

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Business Coordination Board (the "Board") with details of the rationale for signing the Section 22A Collaboration Agreement (the "S22A Agreement") under the Police Act 1996 for the formal establishment of the Forensic Collision Investigation Network.

2. Recommendation

2.1 The Board is recommended to note the contents of the paper and for the Acting Police and Crime Commissioner (the "Acting Commissioner") and the Chief Constable to sign the revised S22A Agreement and for the Acting Commissioner to sign a Decision Notice to this effect.

3. Background

3.1 The Forensic Science Regulator has directed that all police force's Forensic Collision Investigation (FCI) functions must be compliant with the ISO 17020 standard by October 2021 and that forces who join the Forensic Collision Investigation Network (FCIN) will have a further extension to October 2022.

3.2 The Draft S22A Agreement was received and reviewed by Legal, Finance and Scientific Services. On 11th August 2020, the final version of the Section 22A Agreement for the formal establishment of the FCIN was circulated. The revised agreement outlines how the FCIN Programme Team has responded to and incorporated the feedback received from the draft which was circulated in May 2020.

3.3 The Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and Hertfordshire (BCH) Joint Protective Services are fully supportive of the FCIN S22A Agreement; indeed it is acknowledged that ISO accreditation in this area could not be achieved without national collaboration.

4. Summary of Benefits of Joining FCIN through signing of the S22A Agreement

4.1 The FCIN provides a nationally coordinated service which will deliver:

4.2 **ISO Accreditation** – All member forces of the FCIN have an extended deadline of October 2022 to achieve ISO 17020 accreditation.

4.3 **Increased public confidence in policing** – An accredited FCI service will provide impartial forensic evidence to support consistent and thorough investigations, helping the criminal justice system to better serve all those affected by serious road traffic collisions.

4.4 **Increased resilience and interoperability** – A locally based FCI capability that can flex in times of surge or high demand because practitioners are working to the same standards, following the same procedures, using the same technology, all underpinned by a national programme of training. Maintained Chief Officer command and control over resources to meet their local demands.

4.5 **Co-ordination of validation activities** – Prioritisation and coordination of accreditation related activities will reduce potential future costs significantly. It is cost prohibitive for forces to carry out validation work in isolation.

4.6 **Improved Sustainability** – The proposed networked model will effectively succession plan and help address the nationwide shortage of Forensic Collision Investigators (FCIs) which is linked to recruitment difficulties and the cost and availability of the training required.

4.7 **Improved Investment and Income Generation Opportunities** – The intrinsic link to road safety gains support and investment from Department of Transport and other agencies and stakeholders which has the potential to reduce ongoing costs of accreditation to police forces.

4.8 **Professionalisation of the discipline** – With a centralised training and competence scheme providing a recognised training programme, degree qualification, competency assessments and external auditing by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service at local, regional and national level, FCI will become a professional nationwide specialism within policing, again enhancing public confidence in the services delivered.

5. Risks of not joining the FCIN

5.1 **ISO Accreditation** will not be achieved within the Forensic Regulators deadline and local delivery of accreditation for the full scope of Forensic Collision would likely be many years away. Operating without accreditation will call into question the

impartiality and consistency of FCI evidence which in turn will adversely affect the criminal justice process and potentially reduce public confidence in Forensic Collision provision.

- 5.2 **Significant increased costs** would be associated with uncoordinated accreditation activities what will have to be undertaken locally if we do not have access to the national programme of work. Equally, ongoing/future validation activity at a local level will have sizable financial impact.
- 5.3 **Decreased operational capacity** due to the increased administration associated with accredited activities that otherwise would be undertaken by the FCIN regional and technical managers.
- 5.4 The establishment of the FCIN is will timed, providing coordination and collaboration before forces have invested locally to achieve the mandatory ISO accreditation thereby maximising the benefits for all forces and minimising the overall costs. The scale of the ongoing validation required for this discipline is simply unsustainable and unachievable at a local level.
- 5.5 There are some concerns raised within finance section of the S22A Agreement which need to be considered but from the technical perspective the recommendation is for Chiefs and the Acting Commissioner to sign the S22A Agreement to establish the FCIN.

6. Recommendation

- 6.1 The Board is recommended to note the contents of the paper and for the Acting Commissioner and the Chief Constable to sign the revised S22A Agreement and for the Acting Commissioner to sign a Decision Notice to this effect.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Source Document	Joint Chief Officer Board Paper 4 th September 2020
Contact Officers	Nikki Hall – Staff Officer for Chief Constable Nick Dean Stuart Brennan – Head of Scientific Services