Forensic Capability Network

SARC Network News

26/03/2025 | ISSUE 14

SARC End to End Verification Guidance Now Available

To meet compliance to the FSR Code, SARCs are required to use processes that are demonstrated to be valid.

The SARC end to end verification guidance has been published for national roll out and is available on Knowledge Hub. This document defines recommendations on how the end-to-end verification can be completed by SARCs across England and Wales in readiness for achieving accreditation and compliance.

PROVING THE ENTIRE SARC PROCESS IS FIT FOR PURPOSE

These recommendations are based on the verification pilot study that has been conducted at 5 different SARCs which was developed in collaboration with the SARC community, UKAS and OFSR.

This roll out version provides a pragmatic approach to verification ensuring all the essential aspects of the SARC activities are suitably tested to experimentally or objectively demonstrate that they are fit for purpose.

This verification approach uses a combination of:

- Scientific publications,
- FFLM best practice,
- Use of national validations, and
- objective and experimental verification.

Every SARC needs to complete verification for all activities within your end-to-end process, that are included within your scope of accreditation. The objective or experimental verification completed for each of these activities needs to be documented with in your verification report.

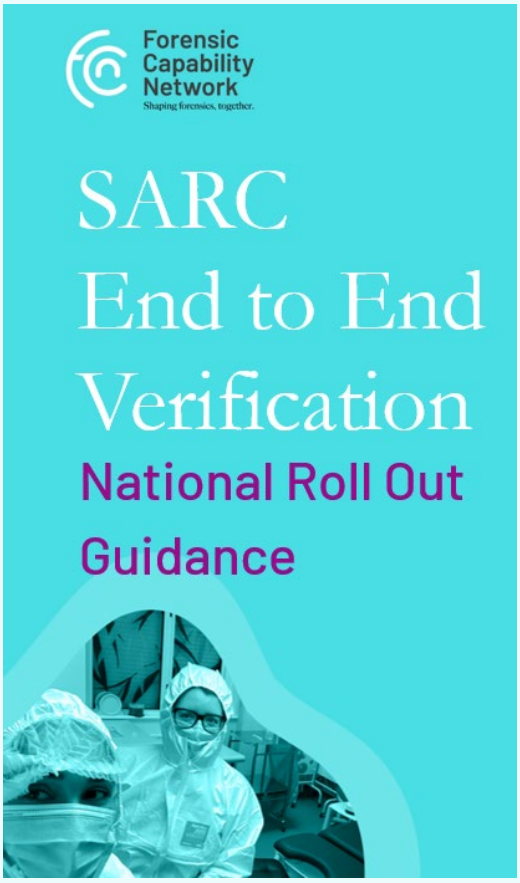
The SARC needs to review and fully understand the verification pilot study and the principles behind the approach for the 'roll out' of this verification. SARCs need to review and justify that the proposed approach meets their end user needs as indicated in the documents.

The FCN have also provided a template verification report and acceptance criteria to support the SARCs completion of your end-to-end verification (available on Knowledge Hub)

These recommendations are supported by both UKAS and the OFSR.

If you have any questions or would like any assistance with any verification or validations, please contact

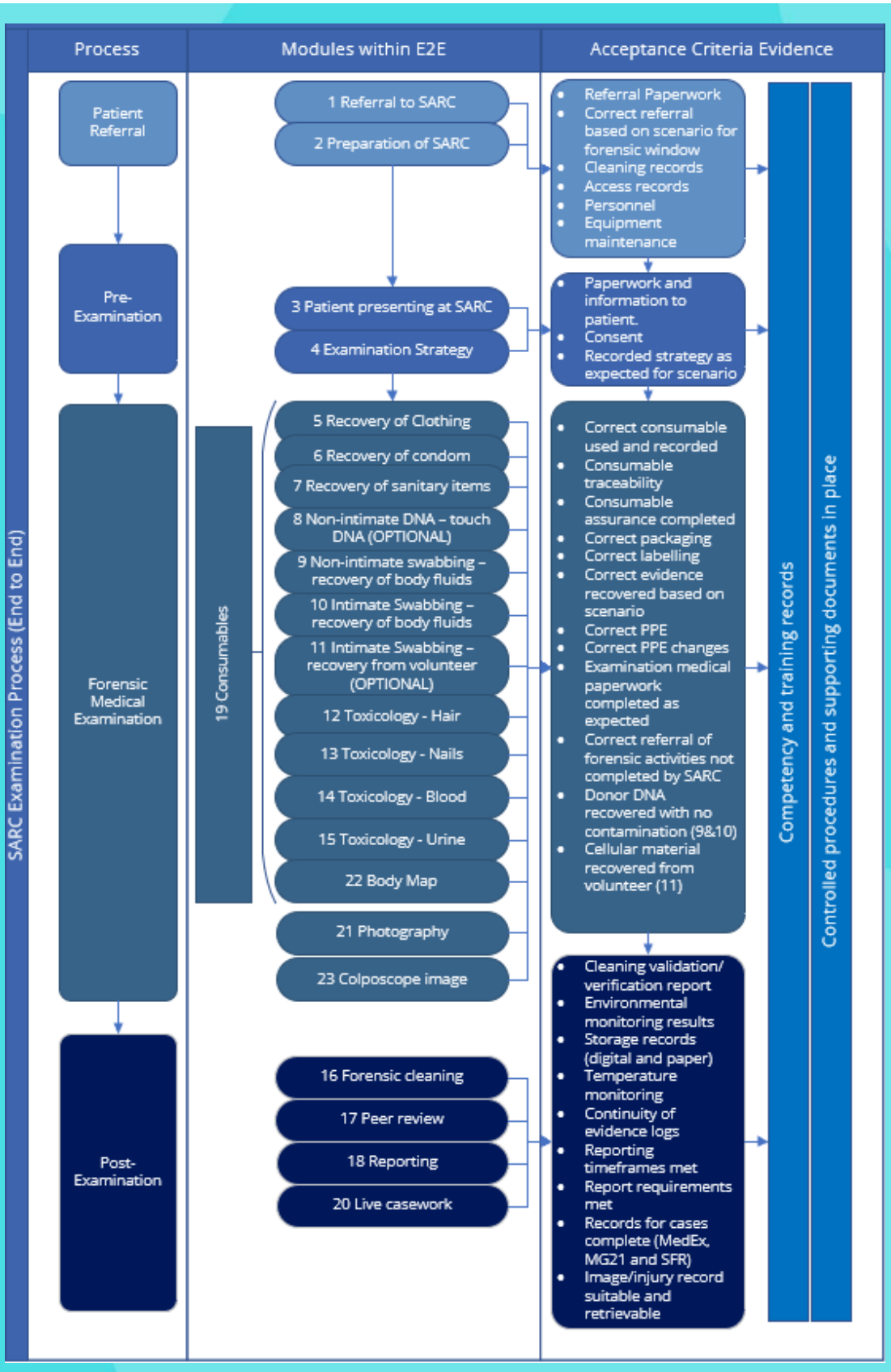
Michelle Gaskell or Guylaine Hanford



Please note: The content within this newsletter relating to the E2E verification and SAI role including the associated documentation have been created incorporating requirements from the V2 draft Code and may be subject to change when V2 is formally published.

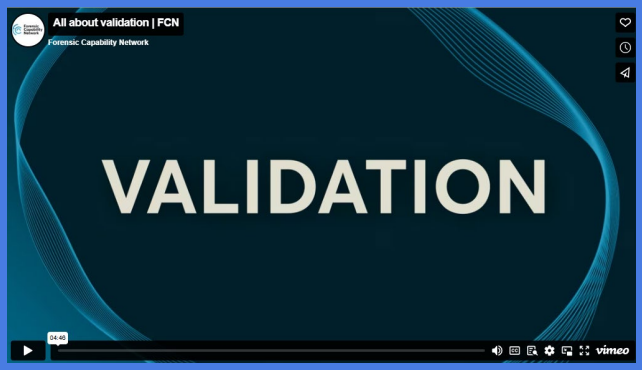
OVERVIEW OF END-TO-END PROCESS AND METHODS

The SARC verification of the forensic medical examination plan, exercise and report must cover all aspects and activities that you complete within your service and want to include within your scope.



What is validation?

Validation is an important process for compliance and accreditation but also for assurance that your methods and processes are fit for purpose. It can be used to assess a new method, a modification of a current method or to verify an established adopted method to ensure that it meets your end user requirements



UNDERSTANDING ELIMINATION DATABASES: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SARC

The recording of the webinar is now available via the picture below. This is password protected.

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UNDERSTANDING VALIDATION

The FCN also produced a document to give some more guidance about what validation is and how it can be utilised. This can be read in conjunction with watching the 'Validation' video above.

Validation of the methods and processes used not only in the analysis of forensic evidence but also in the recovery of the evidence gives confidence in forensic samples integrity and the evidence that enters the criminal justice system.

Compliance includes having personnel competent in the activities that they perform for a forensic science activity (FSA) and this includes competencies specified for method development, validation and verification.

The Role of the Senior Accountable Individual

The Senior Accountable Individual or SAI is a key position in a legal entity's compliance to the FSR Code

The SAI is responsible and accountable for the FSA activities completed within a SARC (and any other forensic unit). The SARC should have a document outlining the responsibilities of the SAI and the SAI should endorse this document

Current Forensic Science Regulator, Gary Pugh

Responsibilities of the SAI – FSA-BIO 100 Forensic examination of sexual assault complainants

The SAI shall be accountable for the strategic leadership of the SARC(s)'s compliance with this Code and be accountable for risks related to any FSA to which the Code applies undertaken by, or under the control of, the SARC(s) from the date the Code comes into force.

The SAI will have particular focus on monitoring and mitigation of the risk of quality failures which could adversely affect an investigation or impede or prejudice the course of justice in any proceedings.

The SAI shall be accountable, on behalf of the SARC(s), in relation to any investigation or compliance action by the Regulator.

The SAI shall have the authority to make decisions and deploy resources to address quality matters in the SARC(s).

The SAI shall be the route through which any communications related to action under sections 5 and/or 6 of the Act will be addressed. The role of the SAI does not require that all communications between a SARC and the Regulator go through that individual.

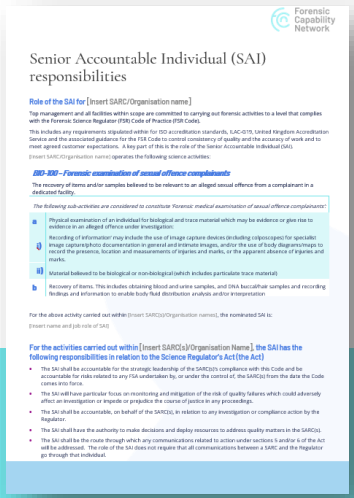
The SARC shall promptly (and in any event within 30 days) notify the Regulator of any change in the information provided about the SAI.

The SAI is accountable for the strategic leadership of the forensic unit's compliance with this Code including, but not limited to, approving methods as fit for purpose. The SAI may delegate authority for signing off the validation or perform the function themselves.

The SAI shall be responsible for the authorisation, either directly or indirectly through delegation, of the competency of any practitioners whose role requires reporting of interpretations and expressions of opinions.

The SAI either directly or through delegation shall notify the Forensic Science regulator of any internal investigation relating to forensic issues that may affect the integrity of the evidence at any point. This includes any suggestion that tampering with an exhibit may have occurred or been attempted. The SAI shall decide the appropriate escalation based on the outcome of the investigation (which may include criminal investigation).

The SAI is responsible for ensuring compliance with this Code and should be senior enough to ensure support services in larger organisations that are outside the SARC(s)'s control assist with compliance and/or demonstration of compliance if required


Forensic Capability Network

Senior Accountable Individual (SAI) responsibilities

Role of the SAI for [Insert SARC/Organisation name]

Top management and all facilities within scope are committed to carrying out forensic activities to a level that complies with the Forensic Science Regulator (FSR) Code of Practice (FSR Code).

This includes any requirements stipulated within for ISO accreditation standards, ILAC-G19, United Kingdom Accreditation Service and the associated guidance for the FSR Code to control consistency of quality and the accuracy of work and to meet agreed customer expectations. A key part of this is the role of the Senior Accountable Individual (SAI).

[Insert SARC/Organisation name] operates the following science activities:

BIO-100 - Forensic examination of sexual offence complainants

The recovery of items and/or samples believed to be relevant to an alleged sexual offence from a complainant in a dedicated facility.

The following sub-activities are considered to constitute 'forensic medical examination of sexual offence complainants':

a. Physical examination of an individual for biological and trace material which may be evidence or give rise to evidence in an alleged offence under investigation:

Recording of information may include the use of image capture devices (including colposcopes) for specialist image capture/photo documentation in general and intimate images, and/or the use of body diagrams/maps to record the presence, location and measurements of injuries and marks, or the apparent absence of injuries and marks.

ii) Material believed to be biological or non-biological (which includes particulate trace material)

b. Recovery of items. This includes obtaining blood and urine samples, and DNA buccal/hair samples and recording findings and information to enable body fluid distribution analysis and/or interpretation

For the above activity carried out within [Insert SARC(s)/Organisation name], the nominated SAI is:

[Insert name and job role of SAI]

For the activities carried out within [Insert SARC(s)/Organisation Name], the SAI has the following responsibilities in relation to the Science Regulator's Act (the Act)

- The SAI shall be accountable for the strategic leadership of the SARC(s)'s compliance with this Code and be accountable for risks related to any FSA undertaken by, or under the control of, the SARC(s) from the date the Code comes into force.
- The SAI will have particular focus on monitoring and mitigation of the risk of quality failures which could adversely affect an investigation or impede or prejudice the course of justice in any proceedings.
- The SAI shall be accountable, on behalf of the SARC(s), in relation to any investigation or compliance action by the Regulator.
- The SAI shall have the authority to make decisions and deploy resources to address quality matters in the SARC(s).
- The SAI shall be the route through which any communications related to action under sections 5 and/or 6 of the Act will be addressed. The role of the SAI does not require that all communications between a SARC and the Regulator go through that individual.

Click on the document image whilst logged into Knowledge Hub to access an SAI responsibilities template

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189 days until
2nd October 2025

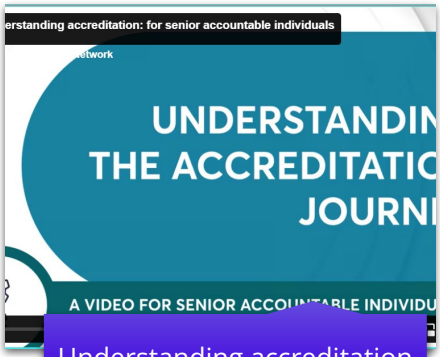
Understanding the Accreditation journey

Accreditation is completely new to SARCs and with the deadline for compliance looming SARCs are getting closer to having visits from UKAS for pre- and initial assessments. It is important to understand what to expect and to ensure that all staff are prepared for what lies ahead.

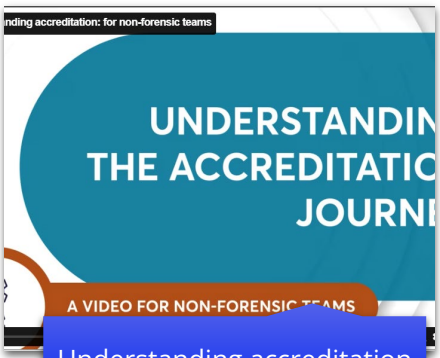
Below are some short videos prepared by the FCN to give different roles some basic background to accreditation, including an introduction by current FSR, Gary Pugh and the NPCC Forensic Lead Chief Constable Nick Dean.

Introduction by Forensic Science Regulator, Gary Push

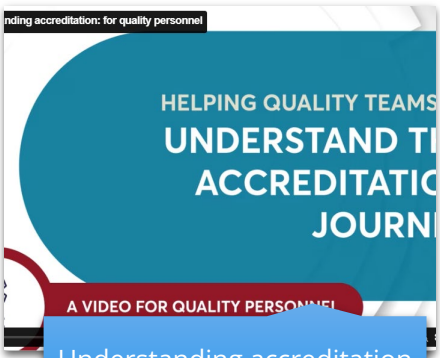
Introduction by NPCC Forensic Lead, CC Nick Dean



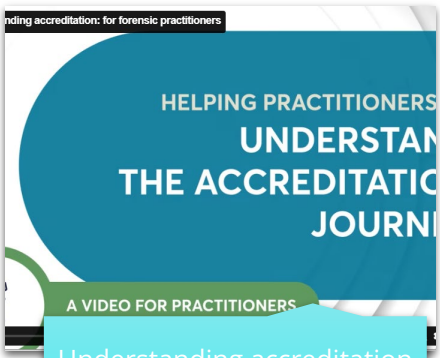
Understanding accreditation for SAIs



Understanding accreditation for non-forensic teams



Understanding accreditation for quality personnel



Understanding accreditation for practitioners

The above videos are for general information on the accreditation journey, however, below is a link for a webinar completed by our very own Michelle Gaskell which is specifically linked to FSR Code compliance and what that means for those providing forensic medical examination services.