

SARC Network News

9th December 2024

Issue #10

Intimate and Non-Intimate Swabbing Training & Competency

A new innovative training approach to intimate and non intimate swabbing has been developed and rolled out nationally providing SARCs across the country the tools to incorporate this aspect of Forensic Healthcare Practitioner (FHP) training into their competency frameworks.



A Consistent Approach to Training & Competency

This innovative training approach developed with Amy Hamm (FFLM) and Abi Marshall (Mountain Healthcare) is an alternative approach to raise contamination awareness.

Three, in person, intimate and non-intimate training events have been hosted by the FCN, provided to 30 FHPs, with great feedback and huge benefits.

This innovative approach was developed using invisible UV body paint and medical gynaecological teaching aids to show points of highest risk of contamination when recovering intimate swabs from victims of sexual offence crimes. This training approach enables the visualisation of contamination throughout the examination process.

Trainees were also trained in how to dose the anatomical dummies to allow implementation within their own organisations with the aim of establishing a consistent approach nationally to FHP training.

This exercise forms just one part of the FHP training. SARCs should have a framework in place defining the training requirements for their staff, including the criteria for acceptable performance.

The training framework should include a variety of training approaches such as:

- Method witness
- Mocked up scenarios
- Review of live case work materials

• Proficiency Testing

The FCN have developed a toolkit for this training which SARCs can adapt to suit the training and competency requirements they have determined for their FHPs. This toolkit includes step by step instructions, PowerPoint presentation for the training, acceptance criteria assessment and information handouts all available on the [Knowledge Hub](#).



SARC specific Declaration Guidance has been developed

We need your views on this SARC specific declaration guidance which has been developed by the Office of the Forensic Science Regulators (OFSR) SARC declaration guidance working group to support SARCs with what they are required to declare after

the 2nd October 2025 accreditation deadline, if they have not yet achieved FSR Code compliance with UKAS accreditation. Currently FSR-GUI-0001 *Declarations of Compliance and Non-Compliance with the Code of Practice* does not provide specific requirements for

SARCs.

This working group aims to develop declarations and mitigations that apply to SARCs to be included in version 3 of FSR-GUI-0001.

Please review this Declaration Guidance Table and feedback your thoughts and questions to Michelle.gaskell@dorset.pnn.police.uk by 10th January. Your input is extremely important to the development of this guidance to ensure they are clear, concise and practical to follow.

SARCs are required, from 2nd October 2025 to declare to the courts their compliance to the FSR Code of Practice by stating whether they are UKAS accredited to ISO15189 for all forensic science activities within the SARCs scope of accreditation.

SARCs that have achieved compliance to the code including ISO15189 accreditation by 2nd October 2025 will be

able to declare 'Yes' to being 'Compliant with the Code'.

SARCs that have not achieved this accreditation for some, or all, of their forensic science activities will need to declare that they are 'not compliant to the code' for those activities, after 2nd October 2025. This table has been developed to support SARCs with how to declare this non-compliance.

It is important that the practitioner reporting to the court understands what 'mitigations to the risk of non-compliance' their SARC has in place.

In addition to updating the FSR-GUI-0001 with SARC specific guidance, the OFSR Declaration Guidance working group will publish a Frequently Asked Questions document to support SARCs with this process.

The intention is for the table shown in Example 1 (shown on page 4) to be used to assess the SARCs level of compliance to the FSR Code of Practice.

Step 1 is to familiarise yourself with FSR-GUI-0001, particularly section 6, before completing this table. There is also further guidance available FCN-MGT-GUI-0035 Mitigation Guidance published by the FCN available on the [Knowledge Hub](#).

Step 2 is to delete out the items in the second column of this table that have not been reported on in the case . As shown in example 2 (shown on page 5).

Examples 2 and 3 are based on the following scenario:

The SARC has not had any UKAS assessments and do not plan to include: *Body Injuries- Photography, Toxicology- Hair, Item Collection- Fibres (inc. Debris) or Hair (Foreign)* within their scope of accreditation. Evidence has been reported on and submitted to court for all the processes listed under the second column 'Scope of non-compliance within the FSA.

Step 3 is to answer 'Yes' or 'No' to the criteria set out for each of the 'Mitigations to the risk associated with non-compliance' listed. Answering a 'Yes' is based on that criteria being in place and being compliant to the FSR Code.

As shown in example 2. Any 'No's answered within the criteria will result in a 'No' for that 'Mitigations to the risk associated with non-compliance'.

This declaration is binary- you only need to declare in this table the forensic science activities that you are not compliant to the FSR Code and ISO15189 accredited for.

Example 3 (page 6) shows an example of the table that would be included in the case work reported to the court.

Example 1

			Mitigations to the risk associated with non-compliance				
Forensic Science Activity	Scope of non-compliance within the FSA	Accredited to ISO15189 as per the Code	Competence of the practitioners involved in the work tested	Method employed validated	Method employed documented	All equipment/software used has been tested and is fit for purpose	The work is undertaken in a suitable environment
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: i. ‘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).	Body Injuries- Documentation, management and interpretation of injuries	Yes/No/ Accreditation Status	Trained and deemed competent in the process	N/A	Methods documented	Service Level Agreements procedure in place	Environment conditions defined (e.g. in a procedure) and checked (e.g. through auditing and ongoing maintenance)
	Body Injuries- Colposcope Images		Training and competency record in place for activity		Document control and review process in place	Equipment quality assurance check/s completed	
	Body Injuries- Photography		Peer review process in place		Audit completed as per audit schedule	Equipment ongoing maintenance completed and planned maintenance schedule in place	
			Observation of live or mock completed				
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.	Non-Intimate Swabbing	Yes/No/ Accreditation Status	Peer review process in place	Proficiency test or cross organisation peer comparison (Interlab or collaborative learning exercise) completed	Methods documented	Consumables demonstrated to be fit for purpose (reference to be inserted for the FCN Consumable Assurances paper)	Cleaning process and products validated and demonstrated to be fit for purpose through verification
	Intimate Swabbing- Internal (inc. Penile) swabs - Oral including mouth rinse - Buccal Swabs - Vaginal Swabs - Anal Swabs		Observation of live or mock completed	Underpinning Scientific literature review for established methods (where available)	Document control and review process in place	Information Security procedure in place and audited within the audit schedule	Evidence of ongoing cleaning monitoring in place though environmental monitoring
	Toxicology - Urine - Blood - Hair		Registered practitioner	Data available to demonstrate the collection processes are fit for purpose		Case management system user acceptance testing completed	Suitability of environment subject to ongoing review. E.g. audits, EM data review/ trend analysis. Including but not limited to: needs of the patient, health and safety, access control, DNA contamination
	Fingernails - Clippings - Scrapings						
	Item Collection- Clothing - Toilet Tissue - Sanitary Wear - Condoms - Fibres (inc. Debris) - Hair (Foreign)						
Enter additional and/or supporting information related to the mitigations:							

			Mitigations to the risk associated with non-compliance				
Forensic Science Activity	Scope of non-compliance within the FSA	Accredited to ISO15189 as per the Code	Competence of the practitioners involved in the work tested	Method employed validated	Method employed documented	All equipment/software used has been tested and is fit for purpose	The work is undertaken in a suitable environment
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: i. '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).	Body Injuries- Documentation, management and interpretation of injuries	Yes/ No /Accreditation Status	Trained and deemed competent in the process <u>Yes</u>	N/A	Methods documented <u>Yes</u>	Service Level Agreements procedure in place <u>Yes</u>	Environment conditions defined (e.g. in a procedure) and checked (e.g. through auditing and ongoing maintenance) <u>Yes</u>
	Body Injuries- Colposcope Images		Training and competency record in place for activity <u>Yes</u>		Document control and review process in place <u>Yes</u>	Equipment quality assurance check/s completed <u>Yes</u>	
	Body Injuries- Photography		Peer review process in place <u>Yes</u>		Audit completed as per audit schedule <u>Yes</u>	Equipment ongoing maintenance completed and planned maintenance schedule in place <u>Yes</u>	
			Observation of live or mock completed <u>Yes</u>				
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.	Non-Intimate Swabbing	Yes/ No /Accreditation Status	Peer review process in place <u>Yes</u>	Proficiency test or cross organisation peer comparison (Interlab or collaborative learning exercise) completed <u>Yes</u>	Methods documented No	Consumables demonstrated to be fit for purpose (reference to be inserted for the FCN Consumable Assurances paper) <u>Yes</u>	Cleaning process and products validated and demonstrated to be fit for purpose through verification No
	Intimate Swabbing- Internal (inc. Penile) swabs - Oral including mouth rinse - Buccal Swabs - Vaginal Swabs - Anal Swabs		Observation of live or mock completed <u>Yes</u>	Underpinning Scientific literature review for established methods (where available) <u>Yes</u>	Document control and review process in place <u>Yes</u>	Information Security procedure in place and audited within the audit schedule No	Evidence of ongoing cleaning monitoring in place though environmental monitoring No
	Toxicology - Urine - Blood -Hair		Registered practitioner <u>Yes</u>	Data available to demonstrate the collection processes are fit for purpose <u>Yes</u>		Case management system user acceptance testing completed No	Suitability of environment subject to ongoing review. E.g. audits, EM data review/ trend analysis. Including but not limited to: needs of the patient, health and safety, access control, DNA contamination No
	Fingernails - Clippings - Scrapings						
	Item Collection- Clothing - Toilet Tissue - Sanitary Wear - Condoms -Fibres (inc. Debris) -Hair (Foreign)		Training & competency record in place for activity <u>Yes</u>	End to end risk assessment complete and mitigations in place No	Process audited within audit schedule No	Service Level Agreements processes in place (including planned maintenance and software updates) No	Accommodation layout and furnishings suitable for the purpose of minimising cross contamination No
Enter additional and/or supporting information related to the mitigations:							

Example 3

			Mitigations to the risk associated with non-compliance				
Forensic Science Activity	Scope of non-compliance within the FSA	Accredited to ISO15189 as per the Code	Competence of the practitioners involved in the work tested	Method employed validated	Method employed documented	All equipment/software used has been tested and is fit for purpose	The work is undertaken in a suitable environment
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: i. '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).	Body Injuries- Documentation, management and interpretation of injuries	No (Organisation not Accredited)	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Body Injuries- Colposcope Images						
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.	Non-Intimate Swabbing	No (Organisation not Accredited)	Yes	No	No	No	No
	Intimate Swabbing: - Internal (inc. Penile) swabs - Oral including mouth rinse - Buccal Swabs - Vaginal Swabs - Anal Swabs						
	Toxicology: - Urine - Blood						
	Fingernails : -Clippings - Scrapings						
	Item Collection: - Clothing - Toilet Tissue - Sanitary Wear - Condoms						

Enter additional and/or supporting information related to the mitigations: UKAS pre assessment completed on 01/10/24

Discount Code for Gynaecological Teaching Aids

For the Verification and Intimate Swabbing training the FCN have used the following gynaecological teaching aids from Sim & Skills:

[Advanced Pelvic Examination and Gynaecological Simulator](#)

As we are aware that SARCs across England and Wales are likely to be looking at purchasing the same anatomical model for your ongoing competency assessments, FCN have therefore arranged for SARCs to have a 10% discount for this purchase.

Use this discount code for 10% off:

SARC10

You can also use this code on the individual prepubescent and SANE modules, product codes LF01244C & LF01244 D.



We want to know how changes that have been made within your SARC to meet the Forensic Science Regulators Code including ISO 15189 standard have affected the time it takes for you to complete a forensic medical examination and what part of the process has become more time consuming to see if there are some opportunities for improvement and shared learning.

To help us with this please complete the following short questionnaire.

[Link to Questionnaire](#)

"Can a SARC be 'Child Friendly' and still meet the FSR Code?"

We would like to hear your questions, concerns or challenges around how to meet the FSR Code including compliance to ISO 15189 whilst ensuring you are providing a suitable child friendly environment.

You are invited to either share your views with us using this link.

[Tell us your views here](#)

Or alternatively [email me](#) to attend a drop-in session with the us on 09th January 2024 10:00-12:00 to discuss any concerns you might have and any suggestions or shared learning on how your SARC have approached these challenges.

Coming up in the next FCN Network News articles we will be providing you with information on the Forensic Information Database Service (FINDS) SARC Verification and Proficiency Testing packages, providing guidance on Staff Elimination Database (SED) and Contamination Elimination Database (CED) requirements as well as information on the Forensic Medical Examination Strategy Collaborative Learning Exercise that you will be invited to participate in next year.