



Request for a Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner Decision

SECTION 1

Please identify who is requesting the decision:			
OPFCC Decision	YES	Decision Number:	PF 017-2025
CCFRA Decision	Y/N	Decision Number:	CF xxxx/yyyy
Constabulary Decision	Y/N	Decision Number:	CC xxxx/yyyy

(Please indicate whether this is a PART 1 or PART 2 decision (For Part 2 decisions, only the Section 1 is to be published))

PART 1 Decision:		PART 2 Decision:	✓
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DECISION TITLE: North West Regional Toxicology Facility withdrawal from s22 agreement in relation to toxicology activity

Executive Summary:

The OPFCC is a member of the North West Joint Oversight Collaboration Committee (NW JOCC) which includes all the PCCs, Deputy Mayors and Chief Constables from the North West.

In September 2020, the NW JOCC approved a business case for the development of a Regional Toxicology Facility (RTF) on behalf of Merseyside Police, Cumbria Constabulary, Cheshire Constabulary, Lancashire Constabulary and North Wales Police. The RTF was to be hosted by Merseyside Police within the force's forensic annexe at Headquarters. The RTF would deliver the forensic service for Section 5A Road Traffic Toxicology 'in house' rather than the respective forces outsourcing to external forensic suppliers.

The proposal was based upon concerns at the time around the stability within the private forensic marketplace. The proposed facility was formally established under a collaboration agreement pursuant to Section 22A of the Police Act 1996.

However, UKAS accreditation was suspended in March 2024 and formally withdrawn in September 2024. After further work to achieve reaccreditation and assessments of the

requirements to build a viable laboratory, the NW JOCC decided that the RTF was no longer a viable facility and it should be decommissioned.

Recommendation:

The Police Fire and Crime Commissioner is asked to:

- 1 Formally record the decision taken by the North West Joint Oversight Collaboration Committee to decommission the Regional Toxicology Service; and
- 2 Formally withdraw from the Section 22a agreement with regard to the Toxicology collaborative activity.

Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner

I confirm that I have considered whether or not I have any personal or prejudicial in this matter and take the proposed decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct for Cumbria Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner. Any such interests are recorded below.

I hereby:	Approve	the recommendations as set out above.

Delete as appropriate:

Signature:  **Chief Executive** 
Date: 23/11/25

For OPFCC Office Use only:

Date of publication of decision:	
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PART 1 – NON CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE TO THE PCC

1. Introduction & Background

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner has the legal power and duty to ‘enter into collaboration agreements with other PCCs, other policing bodies and partners that improve the efficiency or effectiveness of policing for one or more policing bodies or police forces in consultation with the Chief Constable.

The OPFCC is a member of the North West Joint Oversight Collaboration Committee (NW JOCC) which includes all the PCCs, Deputy Mayors and Chief Constables from the North West. These are Cumbria, Cheshire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Lancashire and North Wales. The purpose of this committee is to provide the opportunity for joint scrutiny and oversight of the performance and value of collaborations affecting two or more of the six police forces. It focuses on ensuring existing collaborations are operationally effective and providing both value for money and demonstrable benefits to the public.

In September 2020, the NW JOCC approved a business case for the development of a Regional Toxicology Facility (RTF) on behalf of Merseyside Police, Cumbria Constabulary, Cheshire Constabulary, Lancashire Constabulary and North Wales Police. The RTF was to be hosted by Merseyside Police within the force’s forensic annexe at Headquarters. The RTF would deliver the forensic service for Section 5A Road Traffic Toxicology ‘in house’ rather than the respective forces outsourcing to external forensic suppliers.

The proposal was based upon concerns at the time around the stability within the private forensic marketplace. The proposed facility was formally established under a collaboration agreement pursuant to Section 22A of the Police Act 1996 and the laboratory was built, staff were recruited and ISO accreditation by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) was formally granted in September 2023. Live casework started to be processed by the unit in October 2023.

2. Issues for Consideration

However, due to a number of operational challenges, UKAS accreditation was suspended in March 2024 and formally withdrawn in September 2024. After further work to achieve reaccreditation and assessments of the requirements to build a viable laboratory, the NW JOCC decided that the RTF was no longer a viable facility and it should be decommissioned.

The considered case for withdrawal is set out in the Part 1 Annex (for publication) attached. This information has been taken from the report to and decision of the Merseyside Police and Crime Commission dated 25th November 2025.

3. Financial Implications

Appendix 1

breakdown the investment over each Force since 2020/21.

The costs for 2025/26 are estimates, and include redundancy and completion of financial contract.

	Regional Toxicology			Actuals Split by Force based on % in B.Case				
	Budget	Actual	Variance	16.00%	20.25%	39.60%	17.16%	6.99%
				Lancashire	North Wales	Merseyside	Cheshire	Cumbria
2020/21	411,772	388,733	23,039	62,289	78,717	153,888	66,708	27,131
2021/22	1,323,892	1,154,516	169,376	184,996	233,786	457,038	198,118	80,578
2022/23	981,226	912,108	69,118	146,153	184,699	361,077	156,520	63,659
2023/24	1,013,299	1,078,267	-64,968	172,523	218,349	426,994	185,031	75,371
2024/25	1,092,728	1,295,682	-202,954	207,309	262,376	513,090	222,339	90,568
2025/26 (Inc est forecast & wind up)	1,124,838	925,894	198,944	148,143	187,494	366,654	158,883	64,720
TOTAL	5,947,755	5,755,200	192,555	894,631	1,131,575	2,379,715	958,917	390,362

4. Summary and Recommendation

5. Further Implications

Legal

The decision to decommission the Regional Toxicology Service (RTS) was taken by the North West Joint Oversight Collaboration Committee (NW JOCC) and this decision by the Commissioner is a formal record of that decision and provide the approval to the withdrawal from the s22 agreement.

Risk

See Part 1 Annex.

HR / Equality

No implications.

ICT

No implications.

Procurement

No implications.

Victims

N/A

6. Backgrounds / supporting papers

Annex attached.

Each section below must be completed prior to submission to the Commissioner for decision.

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

I confirm that this report has been considered by the OPFCC Executive Team / CCFRA Executive Team and that relevant financial, legal and equalities advice has been taken into account in the preparation of this report.

Signed:

Date:

CHIEF OFFICER APPROVAL

Chief Constable/Chief Fire Officer (delete as appropriate)

I have been consulted about the proposal and confirm that I am satisfied that this is an appropriate request to be submitted to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.

Signature:

Date:

OPFCC CHIEF OFFICER APPROVAL

Chief Executive (Monitoring Officer) / Chief Finance Officer (Deputy Chief Executive) (delete as appropriate)

I have been consulted about the proposal and confirm that financial, legal and equalities advice has been taken into account in the preparation of this report. I am satisfied that this is an appropriate request to be submitted to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner / Chief Executive (delete as appropriate).

Signature:

Date:

Media Strategy

The decision taken may require a press announcement or media strategy.

Will a press release be required following the decision being considered?

Not at present

If yes, has a media strategy been formulated?

Is the media strategy attached?

What is the proposed date of the press release:

Public Access to Information

Information in this form is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and other legislation. Part 1 of this form will be made available on the PFCC website within 5 working days of approval. Any facts/advice/recommendations that should not be made automatically available on request should not be included in Part 1 but instead in the Part 2 section of the form. Deferment is only applicable where release before that date would not compromise the implementation of the decision being approved.

Is the publication of this form to be deferred?

NO

Until what date (if known):

If yes, for what reason:

If this is a **Part 2 Decision**, has the Part 2 element of this form been completed

YES