

FAL INFORMATION SHEET 1: THE EVOLUTION OF FORENSIC SCIENCE SERVICE LTD. TO FORENSIC ARCHIVE LTD.

Forensic Science Service Ltd. (FSS) previously enjoyed a reputation as the leading provider of forensic science services to the UK criminal justice system, and primarily worked for the 43 police forces of England and Wales, HM Revenue and Customs and HM Coroners. It was internationally renowned for technical innovation and the delivery of high quality services.

FSS had its origins in small forensic laboratories established by local police forces in the 1930s. The development of scientific techniques and the increasing use of forensic science in investigating crime resulted in their amalgamation into larger centres.

In 1966 all the regional laboratories (apart from London) were brought together as the Home Office Forensic Science Service to serve the provincial police forces in England and Wales; and the Central Research Establishment was set up in Aldermaston to support the operational laboratories.

The 1980s saw a rising crime rate which coincided with scientific advances offering increasingly powerful and sometimes more costly services, which meant that FSS had to become more selective about the cases it examined. In February 1989, sweeping changes were recommended in a report by the Home Affairs Select Committee and accepted by the Government in May 1989.

These changes included direct charging of all customers, access by the defence and the possibility of Executive Agency status. The Government decided that FSS would become an Executive Agency and would introduce charging for its services in April 1991.

FSS pioneered the use of DNA profiling in forensic science and was involved in establishing the world's first national criminal intelligence database – the National DNA Database - which was launched in April 1995. In 1996, FSS merged with the Metropolitan Police Forensic Science Laboratory to create a national organisation.

In 1999, FSS became a Trading Fund, and in December 2005, was incorporated as a Government owned company. On 14 December 2010, in a written ministerial statement from the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Home Department, it was announced that FSS would be wound down, and cease its trading operations by March 2012. As of that date, FSS ceased delivering any forensic casework or forensic services to the criminal justice system.

It was determined that FSS would however, continue to manage its forensic casefiles and retained materials and supply these on request, where required, to agencies operating in the criminal justice system.

On 01 October 2012, Forensic Science Service changed its name to Forensic Archive Ltd. to reflect this new functionality.