

14 October 2005

This weeks round up is given over to considering the position of the Scottish Fingerprint Service.

Since the **three Grampian experts** published their report on the **25 June** the overwhelming feeling has been of a system intent on trying to protect the **SCRO experts** at the expense of any who dare to challenge them.

The **Chief Constable of Grampian** in refusing to consider a commendation for his experts failed to follow his own ‘**Professional Standard**’ policy:

‘Grampian Police is committed to developing and maintaining a culture where integrity and ethical standards are afforded the highest priority. The Force has a responsibility to ensure that staff feel able to report concerns about colleagues or the Organisation in a confidential and supportive environment.’

<http://www.grampian.police.uk/foilibrary/fp002/ProfessionalStandardsReporting.pdf>

As happened with the ‘**Lothian and Border’s 14**’ their Chief Constable prefers the role of apologist instead of commending them and honouring his own policy.

The heads of the **Scottish Fingerprint Service** and the **SCRO** meanwhile appear to bury their heads in the sand and carry on as if all in their respective gardens was rosy. What is clear is that within their organisations there are a great number of experts who are far from satisfied with the present situation and see the apparent failure to resolve the dispute between the **Grampian and SCRO experts** as threatening their credibility.

Aside from the apparently unresolved dispute between experts as to what constitutes an identification how many experts feel comfortable with the **SCRO ‘opinion’ defence** – that it is legitimate for two experts to disagree on an identification and that none of them is wrong – an ‘**opinion**’ that threatens the very basis of their ‘**science**’?

In the face of such failure we have to ask how much longer the **Lord Advocate, the courts and the community** can continue to accept any evidence coming from an organisation riven with disputes.

This is not to undermine the **integrity and honesty** of the vast majority of experts – this is being done by their leaders – but to highlight that as long as the system continues to pretend the ‘**emperor has got clothes on**’ the freedom of the individual and reputation of the Scottish forensic services is being seriously undermined.

In closing **Shirley and Iain** would like to thank those who feel strongly enough about her situation and the harm being done to fingerprinting to submit vital information that is helping to complete the jigsaw. This information whether **confidential** or not is proving vital to understanding just went on within SCRO over the past 9 years. The picture that is emerging is an extremely worrying one and anyone who thought that the **Scottish Fingerprint Service** would herald the dawn of a new attitude of **openness** and **integrity** is going to be sadly disappointed.

The time is long overdue for a statement acknowledging the serious issues to be resolved and outlining the strategy for doing so.

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