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Cut Costs at All Costs!**R J Flanagan****Department of Precision Medicine, Networked Services, King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS****Correspondence: Prof Robert Flanagan****Department of Precision Medicine****Networked Services****King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust,****Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS****Tel: +44 203 299 5824**

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The UK Government decision to close its Forensic Science Service (FSS) was announced in December 2010. England and Wales were thus left bereft of impartial, high-level scientific expertise to support the criminal justice system. Although the reasoning given was that the FSS was 'losing £2 million per month', the reality was that private-sector 'providers' were intent on cherry-picking parts of the 'business' – government literally saw what it wanted to see and would look no further. Why was this allowed to happen?

Firstly, there is over-reliance on 'test ordering' and a desire to cut costs at all costs in the belief that an analysis is the same no matter who does it, or how it is done. In large part this has been engendered by the modern panacea of 'quality management'. Regulators have become obsessed with the notion that conformance to expensive accreditation and inspection schemes based in reality on industrial processes will ensure that all results are accurate, timely, fit for purpose, easy to interpret, and above all give value for money. However, in industry not only are the processes and analytes known and likely limited in number, but also matrices can be sampled reliably and reproducibly, and sampling repeated if necessary.¹ This is most definitely not the case in forensics where the pre- and post-analytical phases, often the most crucial part of any investigation, are left to guidelines or local policies that are neither inspected, nor enforced.

¹ This does not of itself prevent fraud though: Symonds T, Ellison C. Grenfell Tower cladding failed to meet standard. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-43558186> (accessed 28 May 2018).

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