

SI Identification Number	SI2917
Policy Ownership	Legacy and Justice Branch
Issue Date	13/09/2017
Review Date	5 years from issue date
Governing Service Policy	Criminal Justice
Cancellation of	
Classification	OFFICIAL [PUBLIC]

SI2917

Police Service of Northern Ireland DNA Elimination Database



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1. Introduction

This Service Instruction provides guidance concerning how the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) take, use, retain and record Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) samples and profiles from Police Officers deemed at risk of contaminating crime scenes and evidential materials.

These measures are essential in the context of:

- development in DNA profiling techniques;
- high investigative value placed on this technology;
- good practice within professional policing.

Unattributed DNA profiles in casework are usually added to the DNA Intelligence Databases; and in serious crime may well form the bases for extensive further investigative processes such as familial DNA searching operations and very public DNA Mass Screens.

The purpose of a DNA Elimination Database is to reduce to a minimum the risk of such actions being taken, on what are in fact contaminant DNA profiles from Police personnel.

2. Aims

To establish a comprehensive PSNI DNA Elimination Database for use in investigations.

3. Implementation

New Police Officers

Subscription to the Police Elimination Database (PED) will be mandatory for all new officers - Section 19 PSNI Regulations 2005 applies. A sample may be taken during the PSNI student officer training programme.

Existing Police Officers

Primarily those attending crime scenes, searches and dealing with the seizure of items from which DNA is to be recovered – Section 19 PSNI Regulations 2005 applies or the taking will be on a voluntary basis. Police officers and staff occasionally contaminate scenes/items with their own DNA due to the operational environment. Having all relevant PSNI personnel on a DNA elimination database will reduce the time taken to investigate DNA profiles from a crime that remains unresolved, by quickly identifying police contamination through the use of the database. It affords to ALL Police personnel the best protection

against the inadvertent evidential reporting of their profile, and loading of it to the DNA Database as an unresolved crime scene profile.

Sample Purpose; Procedure; Retention and Removal

Purpose - a sample is used to generate [a] DNA profile using the contemporaneous method. Once the profiling process is complete, the physical sample (swab) is destroyed. The profile will be used for elimination screening purposes, it will be held on the Police Elimination Database (PED) separate from any other parts of the DNA database. The profile will not be released to any third party without the consent of the donor, for example another forensic provider. If released it will be in anonymised form.

Sampling Process - a specific PED DNA kit will be used that will record relevant details and ensure the integrity of the sample and information.

Access to the Records - the nominal records will be securely held within the PSNI DNA Unit. For the Northern Ireland DNA Database, Forensic Science Northern Ireland (FSNI) will hold the DNA profile and connected anonymised reference within the database. Access to both the PSNI DNA

Unit and FSNI will be limited to a small number of nominated staff.

At FSNI, the anonymised DNA profile is incorporated into the DNA Management System to allow for automated contamination screening in the conduct of normal business. Access to the FSNI DNA Management System is also limited, and it sits within FSNI's secure network. The PSNI may provide these DNA profiles to the Centralised Elimination Database (CED) managed on the National DNA Database for elimination purposes.

Where Matches Occur - matches to the PED will be notified to the FSNI Biology/DNA Reporting Officer in charge of the case and to the PSNI DNA Unit. The PSNI DNA Unit will inform the Investigating Officer, responsible for the case, of the crime scene/item DNA profile matching an identified Police Officer. The fact that a match has occurred is included in the report from FSNI to PSNI, but without identifying the Police Officer concerned.

A record is retained on the FSNI casefile, but is considered as sensitive information and so will be redacted prior to any disclosure. Although it is considered very unlikely to be required to do so, PSNI will be obliged to disclose the identity of a

matching Police Officer through disclosure should it be required by Court Order.

Retention and Removal - Police Officers DNA elimination profiles will be held during the full time of police service and for 12 months after a Police Officer leaves the Service. This is to enable elimination screening for cases that may take several months to process through the usual forensic channels. Following the 12 month period the DNA profile will be permanently removed from the PED and not held in any form.

Appendix A Contact Us

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