

<b>SI Identification Number</b>	SI2917
<b>Policy Ownership</b>	Innovation and Standards Department
<b>Issue Date</b>	13/09/2017
<b>Review Date</b>	5 years from issue date
<b>Last Updated</b>	18/01/2019
<b>Governing Service Policy</b>	Criminal Justice
<b>Cancellation of</b>	
<b>Classification</b>	<b>OFFICIAL [PUBLIC]</b>

## SI2917

# DNA and Fingerprint Elimination Databases



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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, profiles and fingerprints from personnel working in and for the Police Service 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; and
- good practice within professional policing.

Unattributed DNA profiles and fingerprints in casework are usually added to the DNA and fingerprint Intelligence Databases; and in serious crime may well form the bases for extensive further investigative processes.

The purpose of biometric Elimination Databases are to reduce to a minimum the risk of such actions being taken, on what are contaminant DNA profiles and fingerprints from Police personnel.

## 2. Aims

To maintain and manage comprehensive PSNI DNA and Fingerprint Elimination Databases for use in investigations.

## 3. Implementation

### **New Personnel to the PSNI**

Subscription to the Police Elimination Databases (PED) will be mandatory for all new officers - Section 19 PSNI Regulations 2005 applies. A DNA sample and finger/palm prints may be taken during the PSNI student officer training programme. Requirements for new staff roles or contracted staff will be stipulated in contracts and role descriptions.

### **Existing Police Personnel**

Primarily those attending crime scenes, searches and dealing with the seizure of items from which DNA is to be recovered or examined for fingerprints – 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 and fingerprints due to the operational environment. Having all relevant PSNI personnel on DNA and fingerprint elimination databases will reduce the time

taken to investigate unidentified contaminant DNA profiles and fingerprints from a crime. It affords to ALL Police personnel the best protection against the inadvertent evidential reporting of their profile and fingerprint, and loading of it to the DNA and fingerprint Databases as an unresolved evidential item.

### **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. Finger and palm prints are taken to add to the PSNI elimination section on the national Fingerprint system.

**Sampling Process** - a specific PED DNA kit and fingerprint forms 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 Identification Bureau. 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 Identifications Bureau and FSNI is 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 during 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 on the PED will be notified to the FSNI Biology/DNA Reporting Officer in charge of the case and to the PSNI Identification Bureau. The PSNI Identification Bureau will inform the Investigating Officer, responsible for the case, of the crime scene/item DNA profile/fingerprint matching a PSNI member. The fact that a match has occurred is included in the report (PFR1)

for the Investigating Officer. This information will be included in the casefile and disclosed to the courts.

For DNA, a record is retained on the FSNI casefile. Any elimination data 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 member through disclosure should it be required by Court Order.

**Retention and Removal** – PSNI members DNA profiles and Finger/palm prints will be held during the full time of police service and for 12 months after a member 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 elimination data will be permanently removed from the PEDs and not held in any form.

## Appendix A Contact Us

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