

SI2917

DNA and Fingerprint Elimination Databases

SI Identification Number	SI2917
Policy Ownership	Operational Support Department
Initial Publication	14/09/2017
Review Cycle	5 years
Reviewed	17/01/2023
Last Amended	N/A
Governing Service Policy	Criminal Justice
Cancellation of	N/A
Classification	OFFICIAL [PUBLIC]

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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*. In serious crime they may well form the basis for extensive further investigative processes.

The purpose of *Biometric Elimination Databases* is to reduce to a minimum the risk of contaminant DNA profiles and

fingerprints inadvertently deposited at crime scenes by Police personnel being incorrectly loaded to *National Crime Scene Databases*.

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 attested Officers - [Section 18](#) and [Section 19](#) of the [PSNI Regulations 2005](#) applies. During PSNI student Officer training, students will be asked to supply a DNA sample along with a set of fingerprints. There is a requirement to supply both upon attestation. 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 18 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.

4. Process

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, for example another forensic provider, without the consent of the donor. 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 DNA elimination kit and fingerprint elimination forms will be used that will record relevant details and ensure the integrity of the sample and information.

Access to the Records

The 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 the information held both by PSNI Identification Bureau and FSNI is limited to a small number of nominated PSNI 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 anonymised 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
- 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 case file. 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.

5. Retention and Removal

PSNI members DNA profiles and Finger/palm prints will be held during the full time of police service and destroyed as soon as practicable after a member leaves the Service unless prior written consent is provided by the Police Officer to its retention for a period of 12 months following their departure from the PSNI.

Extension to Retention process

Where a longer period (up to 12months) is required, Scientific Support will write to the individual to request permission to keep their biometric data after their departure date in order to facilitate elimination comparisons.

6. Policy Links

Policy Links
SI0116 – Serious Crime Scenes
SI0518 – Data Protection
SP0816 – Information Management

Appendix A Contact Us

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