



THE FORENSIC SCIENCE SERVICE®

Fact sheet (4)

Familial Searching

February 2005

Familial searching is a service developed by the Forensic Science Service® (FSS®) and offered in collaboration with the Custodian of The National DNA Database® (NDNAD) to police forces. The service is being delivered by the FSS's Forensic Intelligence Bureau which collates and assesses forensic intelligence information in order to maximise its full potential.

Familial searching is aimed at providing DNA intelligence to investigations in which a full DNA profile has been obtained from a crime scene sample of a serious offence, but there are no matches when this profile is checked loaded to the NDNAD. However, its use is not appropriate for every situation, each case has to be looked at on an individual basis.

Familial searching is based on the way in which DNA is inherited within a particular family group, DNA profiles of individuals who are related to each other being more likely to contain similarities in their DNA profiles than two unrelated individuals.

Casefile:

It was used for the first time in 2002 in the case of three girls who were raped and murdered in South Wales in 1973. Even though a DNA profile was obtained, a search against the NDNAD and an intelligence-led screen failed to find a match. The FSS decided to try something new by searching the database for possible relatives of the offender. Following certain assumptions that families tend to live in the same area, and that criminality tends to run in families (and therefore a relative could be on the database), a search came up with 100 names. This intelligence was provided to the police and, combined with information they already had, led to a local suspect being identified – Joe Kappen - who had died. His family volunteered to give DNA samples to help the investigation and the results of these DNA tests led to the exhumation of his body. Subsequent DNA tests showed a match with samples obtained from the bodies of the three dead girls.

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