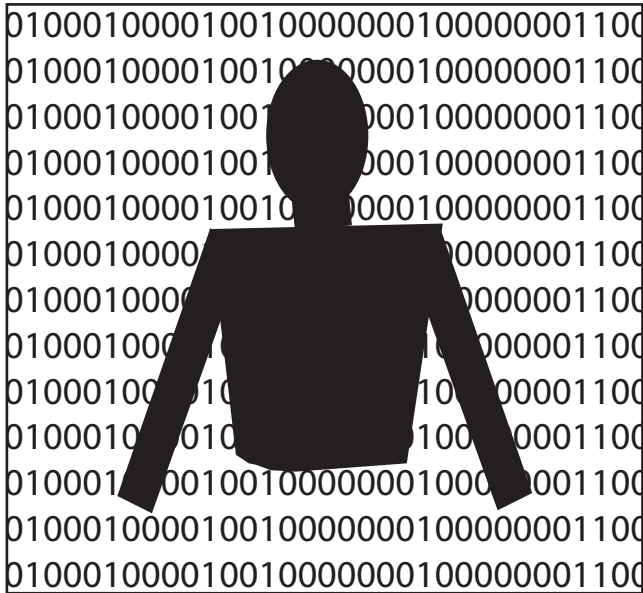


Staff Elimination Database - *Why you are being asked to participate?*

1. What is a Staff Elimination Database?



Since June 2000 it has been a condition of employment that all new entrants to the Forensic Science Service (FSS) supply a sample for the Staff Elimination Database (SED). All staff working in laboratory areas are required to donate samples and many others have volunteered samples. We also take samples from visitors and contractors who need to have access to FSS buildings such as service engineers, film crews, cleaners etc.

All contractors and visitors who require access to laboratory and high risk areas will be asked to provide two mouth scrapes. Samples will also be required from contractors and visitors with regular access to low risk areas in FSS buildings. These samples will be processed to obtain your DNA profile which will be added to the SED. The database is completely separated from the crime stain processing laboratories and the National DNA Database®. **There is no risk of your DNA profile being loaded to the National DNA Database.**

Your profile will be held on the SED until you cease to be employed by the FSS or you no longer visit the FSS. There is a police elimination database (PED) for front line officers who may be in a position to contaminate a scene. There are 95,000 profiles retained on the PED. However, this database is not managed by the FSS. Police visitors will also be asked to provide samples for the SED using the same criteria above.

2. Will my profile be loaded to the National DNA Database?

No, it will be held in a subsection of the FSS's staff elimination database, which is entirely separate from the National DNA Database. By eliminating your profile from being associated with a crime, this will actually prevent your profile being loaded inadvertently to the National DNA Database as a result of contamination.

3. Why do you need to take mouth scrapes?

DNA analysis is the most important advance in forensic science since the advent of fingerprinting. In the early days of DNA profiling, sensitivity was such that a bloodstain had to be the size of a ten pence piece in order to obtain sufficient DNA to produce a profile.

Over the last 20 years DNA profiling techniques have been dramatically improved by developing much more robust and precise analytical techniques. This has led to an increase in the sensitivity of the tests to such an extent that results can be obtained from as little as a few cells. Even a swab of an item that someone has handled can yield a DNA profile.

As an individual who will be working at a laboratory where forensic samples are processed, your DNA may inadvertently contaminate the result from a crime stain and it is therefore vital that this is eliminated from being associated with the crime.

Inadvertent contamination can occur even when all possible precautions are being taken. It is an unfortunate consequence of the improved sensitivity we can now achieve but one we feel is manageable by reducing the risk of contamination at source and ensuring that adequate systems are in place to detect it.

4. What happens if you obtain my profile as a result of contamination of a crime stain?

Only those results obtained from samples processed at the site where you work or visit will be checked against your profile. If a profile obtained is found to match that of an individual on our staff database, by law we have to disclose this result to the police. However, we avoid providing the name of the individual to the police wherever possible. Work carried out in R&D has demonstrated that DNA can be transferred by secondary contact e.g. transferred between individuals by touching door handles. Therefore, having access to an FSS building can provide an explanation for the potential to contaminate a sample. ACPO have agreed that if the FSS conclude that the result is due to contamination, they will accept this explanation. With this information the police will be able to save time and effort by re-directing their line of enquiry.

5. Will my DNA profile be destroyed when I leave the company or no longer visit the FSS?

The FSS often has to consider retrospective checks for contamination purposes and we would prefer to retain your profile on an archive database. Your profile will not be searched routinely but the archive may be searched in historic cases.

Your profile is automatically archived three months after you cease to be employed by the FSS or you inform us that you are no longer going to visit the FSS on a regular basis. This gives sufficient time for any samples that may have been contaminated to go through the process and be screened. You can request that your profile is completely removed from the database when you leave.

6. What will my profile be searched against?

Your profile will be screened against the profiles we generate in the analysis of samples recovered from scenes of crime. Your profile will not be searched against the profiles held on the National DNA Database.

7. Will my DNA profile be given to other agencies, such as insurance companies?

No, your DNA will be taken strictly for the purposes alluded to on the consent form that you will be required to sign when providing a sample. The areas of DNA we test for forensic purposes only allow discrimination between different individuals; the profile tells us nothing about your health or susceptibility to inherited disease. The profile does enable the scientist to determine the sex of the individual however.

8 . What is the Forensic Science Service doing to minimise the risks?

The FSS is making considerable investments to improve the way we avoid and detect contamination. This ranges from modernisation of laboratory accommodation, continual review of our anti-contamination policy and developing software to carry out contamination checks automatically. The FSS has an 'Anti-Contamination Code of Practice' which is in line with the recommendations of European Network of Forensic Science Institute (ENFSI).