

This response was submitted to the consultation held by the Nuffield Council on Bioethics on *The Forensic use of bioinformation: ethical issues* between November 2006 and January 2007. The views expressed are solely those of the respondent(s) and not those of the Council.

Anon 19

Dear Madam,

I write to express some of my concerns regarding the UK's national DNA database. I firstly find it an area of great concern that the DNA of those who have not been convicted of any crime is still retained. I was physically attacked last year and gave a piece of clothing soaked in my blood to the police as evidence. How am I to know that DNA has not been taken from this and stored?

The police are, so I gather, not obligated to inform or seek permission from people they add to the database. Also, in a society where one is innocent until proven guilty, I hardly think it is healthy for innocent people to be filed and catalogued in the same way as known criminals.

In addition, I am greatly concerned about the implications of universal compulsory inclusion in the database - as proposed by the Prime Minister last week. If I am not a convicted criminal and the state has no reason to see me as a threat, why should I be treated in the same way as a criminal suspect by default?

While my opinion may be unfashionable these days, I consider it quite sinister that the government should hold such data on people who are not causing any concern and have never broken the law in their lives. It has been apparently forgotten that a healthy contract between government and governed depends on mutual trust and respect - but how can I trust or respect my government when it seems to see me as a potential criminal suspect? It certainly doesn't seem to trust and respect me any more.

And what if this data is abused? The government cannot tell us what awaits us in ten, or twenty or forty years time: what if its successors are malign or undemocratic? This is yet another reason why the DNA database should only contain details of convicted criminals - for once, the innocent should just be left alone. Anonymity and the benefit of the doubt are both essential for normal human relationships, both on the personal and the national level.

Many thanks for your time.