

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.

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Public Consultation: Forensic use of Bio information

Students were from Kings School, Wolverhampton. There was a wide ethnic mix within the group, with the majority of participants representing ethnic minorities.

Session 1: Fourteen 17-year olds (8 males and 6 females).

Session 2: Eleven 18-year olds (4 males and 7 females).

Question 2: Sampling powers

Do you think the police should have access to everyone's DNA profile?

- In the first session 11 of the group agreed with this statement, 3 people disagreed. The results for the second group were vastly different, where none thought that the police should have unlimited access to everyone's DNA. Three people didn't think the police should have access, 8 people were not sure. The difference could be accounted for an older audience in the second group, where they wanted more clarification of the question before making a decision. The overwhelming reason for agreeing was that:

'If a member of my family was killed I would want the killer found as soon as possible, using their DNA profile.'

One reason for disagreeing with the police having access to everyone's DNA profile, is that:

'If I had committed a minor crime I would not want to be caught.'

The people who were not sure were worried about the security of a national database, with a potential for stealing and misuse of data. Concerns were also raised about the police and whether with unlimited access to everyone's DNA, there would be greater opportunity for corruption.

From whom should the police be able to take fingerprints or DNA?

- All the students believed bioinformation could be taken from suspects, people in the surrounding area and close relatives of any victims, but there must be good reasons behind suspicion before DNA is taken.
- 8 people in the first group were for voluntary DNA sampling of the general public.

Is it acceptable for bioinformation to be taken from minors?

- All agreed that it is acceptable
 - 'If young people commit a crime they should be treated like adults'
- Storage of bioinformation could be an issue as young peoples' fingerprints or iris scans could change through damage, therefore mass storage might not be that useful.
- DNA should only be taken for serious crimes (hurting people and serious theft).
 - 'If young people have their DNA or fingerprints taken for minor crimes, this could act as a deterrent and prevent further crimes.'

Question 3: The management of the NDNAD

How long should non-criminals have their DNA stored on databases for?

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- Once a case has been solved all the students think that suspects' and volunteers' DNA should be destroyed.

Who else should have access to any DNA databases?

- All the students think that parents and families of missing/deceased people should have access to any national DNA databases. This should be controlled by a government organisation or company. Not everyone should have access to the information. MI5 and specialist police units could also have access, though there should be strict measures to control who has access.

Question 4: Ethical Issues

Are some ethical groups and groups of particular ages disproportionately represented?

- In the first group 9 people said yes; 5 people said no. The second group after much discussion thought that:
'It would be much fairer to take everyone's DNA.'

Should we collect DNA samples from babies?

'It would make the database fairer, but its not right.'
A certain age should be set when DNA would be taken from young children, possible around 5 years. There was no consensus about what to do if parents wanted to opt out.

'A company should hold everyone's DNA and the police should go to them to get information. They must have a warrant or a permit.'

One person mentioned that they didn't trust the police, so would not be happy with this arrangement.