

Identification of Body Fluid Type for DNA profiles loaded to the National DNA Database

7th October 2024

These guidelines are for the attention of all Police Forces in England and Wales.

In December 2023, The Home Office Forensic Information Databases Service (FINDS) issued guidance to Forensic Service Providers (FSPs) on the presumptive testing of body fluids prior to comparison of DNA profiles against the National DNA Database (NDNAD).

The instruction to FSPs was that, when assigning a sample type to a DNA submission for loading onto the NDNAD, the specific sample type should only be applied if a positive presumptive test has been obtained for that body fluid, using a validated method. Otherwise, the default option should be to use 'cellular material', from the following list of sample type options for unsolved crime stains:

- Blood stain
- Liquid blood
- Saliva stain
- Semen stain
- Hair roots
- Other tissue
- Cellular material

This memo was issued due to concerns expressed by the Forensic Science Regulator that investigators or the courts may infer that the matching DNA came from a specific body fluid, and this could have unintended consequences on individual cases, if body fluid attribution had been an assumption rather than the result of a positive presumptive test using a validated method. With effect from 28th June 2024, all FSPs within the private sector marketplace delivering DNA services to policing, have agreed to implement this change.

It is therefore important that Forces submitting samples to an external FSP for DNA profiling, make clear within their submission whether a positive presumptive test has already been conducted, using a validated method, either at the scene or within a Force DNA search and recovery facility. This will allow the FSP to select the appropriate sample type when submitting DNA profiles for inclusion or speculative searching against the National DNA Database.

The FCN and FINDS are working with the Forensic Science Regulator to assess the risks associated with previous practices where body fluid inferences may have impacted investigations.

The FCN Marketplace Team continues to work closely with FSPs to determine the requirements for performance and management information for crime stain services and biology casework. This will ensure that national, meaningful success rate data for DNA can still be collated despite these reporting restrictions.

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