

FIND Strategy Board

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Open Minutes of Meeting

19th September 2024 – Microsoft Teams

10.00am-2.00pm

Present:

CORE MEMBERS

ORGANISATION	MEMBER
National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC)	Ben Snuggs (BS)
Home Office representing the Home Secretary	Lucy Bradshaw-Murrow (LB-M)

APPOINTED MEMBERS (as set out in the Governance Rules)

ORGANISATION	MEMBER
Biometrics and Surveillance Camera Commissioner representative	Tahmida Hussain (TH)
Scottish Biometric Commissioner representative	Dr Brian Plastow (BP)
Information Commissioners' Office	Natasha Andrews (NA)
Devolved Administration – Police Scotland	Suzanne Chow (SC) Gillian Jones (GJ)
Devolved Administration – Scottish Police Authority (forensics)	Helen Haworth (HH)

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APPOINTED MEMBERS

ORGANISATION	MEMBER
NPCC – Counter Terrorism (CT) Forensic Database	Shazia Khan (SK)

SECRETARIAT

Home Office Forensic Information Databases Service (FINDS) - Head of Unit	Zo-dee Ledger (ZL)
Home Office Forensic Information Databases Service (FINDS)	Caroline Goryll (CG)

IN ATTENDANCE

ORGANISATION	MEMBER
Home Office Biometrics (HOB) Programme	Stuart Robertson (SR)
NPCC-HOB	Guy Mantoura (GM)
Home Office, Interpol and International Biometric Exchange Team	Bianca Russo (BR) Phoebe Buchanan (PB)
National Crime Agency (NCA)	Roy Yarnold (RY)
Forensics Capability Network (FCN)	Debbie Sharp (DS)
Home Office – Deputy Director, Strategy, Commissioning and Forensic Information Services	Jennifer Leech (JL)

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APOLOGIES:

ORGANISATION	MEMBER
Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC)	Darryl Preston Alexandra Campbell
Devolved Administration – Northern Ireland	Stephen Campbell
Forensic Science Regulator (FSR)	Gary Pugh Chanda Lowther-Harris June Guinness
Biometrics and Forensics Ethics Group representative (BFEG)	Niamh Nic Daeid
Scottish government Head of Forensics Policy: Police Powers Unit	Elaine Hamilton
NPCC – DNA	Emily Burton
FCN	Vicki Burgin

1.0 & 2.0 Welcome, Introduction and Strategic Developments

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

3.0 Previous Minutes (0924/01a & b)

3.1 No update to previous minutes from Board.

4.0 Action Review (0924/02)

4.1 The Board went through the action register updates.

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07/20 Take forward the reporting of crime scene errors from forces – include in data assurance strategy. Board agreed to **close action** and track through risk register STRAT 02.

05/22 Chair and Head of FINDS to share NPCC legal advice on the retaking of samples with key stakeholders. In progress. This change is in the backlog of work and waiting for design recourse. It is currently number five in the queue. The chair has requested that it is prioritised.

11/22 FINDS & HOB to discuss MOUs between law enforcement and the Home Office in the sharing of biometric data. In progress. Documentation set for IDENT1 now approved and completed; the equivalent set for NDNAD is nearing completion.

03/24 International Policy representative to bring updated Prüm search data to the Board. In progress. Data will be like what is already presented.

05/24 CT representative to produce a briefing on Investigative Genetic Genealogy (IGG) project. On agenda for this meeting – Board agreed to **close action**.

08/24 FINDS to monitor barcode issue, progress in identifying replacement and keep Strategy Board updated. Board agreed to **close action** as it is being tracked through the FINDS risk register. FINDS to bring back to the Board at an appropriate time.

5.0 Operational Risks and Performance

Risk & Issues Register (924/03)

- 5.1 The group went through the risk register, there are eight open risks with updates, four of these have been raised this quarter and two risks are being proposed to be closed.

Action 10/24 CT representative to send FINDS Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) paper on assessment of suitable software for Missing Persons database replacement.

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Following a discussion, it was agreed that there needs to be better understanding of the mechanism for prioritisation and funding through HOB.

Action 11/24 Deputy Director, Strategy, Commissioning and Forensic Information Services and Head of FINDS to discuss HOB prioritisation and funding with HOB Programme Manager and clarify the process which FINDS can request HOB support.

5.2 The two outstanding issues and two escalations were discussed, one of the escalations was raised this quarter.

Action 12/24 – Head of FINDS to investigate if any of the 17,115 records involved in FINDS-ESC-099 have been exchanged through Prüm and the consequence of any matches identified.

Highlight report (0924/04)

5.3 The FINDS scorecard was presented. There were no significant fluctuations in data compared to the previous quarter. FINDS have restored access to the IDENT1 Management Information reports and are now validating the data.

International DNA and Fingerprint exchange

Interpol DNA Exchange update and Fingerprint Prüm & Interpol Update 0924/06

5.4 Data on Interpol DNA and fingerprint exchanges and Prüm fingerprint exchanges was presented. The reasons for lower outbound fingerprint searches were discussed.

An international policy update was provided. HOB are progressing with their business case for Prüm II but negotiations with the EU have not progressed any further. The Home Office, Interpol and International Biometric Exchange Team are hosting their first International Biometrics Board which is policy focused.

An update on Prüm DNA metrics was provided, highlighting that the UK is now connected to all 27 EU member states. It was agreed that going forward the Board

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would just like to be updated by exception on Prüm and a discussion ensued about communications to celebrate the achievement.

Action 13/24 CT representative and international representative to compile a briefing for external stakeholders to highlight the milestone that the UK is now connected to all Prüm member states.

Identification of sperm donors through PACE profiles.

- 5.5 Head of FINDS gave the Board an update on an unusual request into FINDS to use the NDNAD for the identification of sperm donors. Some additional information about the police investigation has been provided by the force, but it was agreed that they need to provide a better rationale to justify their request.

Mixture searching using Database Likelihood ratio (DBLR) software.

- 5.6 A request from a Forensic Service Provider (FSP) to do a search of a mixture that would be more than two individuals was discussed. This request was circulated to Board members ex-committee who were asked to approve the approach in general terms and for the use in a specific case. Members were broadly supportive of the request. FINDS have discussed this with the Office of the Forensic Science Regulator and raised it at the Biometrics and Forensics Ethics Group (BFEG). Questions were raised about how to ensure the validation has been appropriate for the software. The Forensic Science Regulator and FINDS have proposed that they set up a small independent expert panel process whereby a request can be received from an FSP for non-UKAS accredited software and there is an assessment as to whether that validation has been done to the appropriate level. The terms of reference and the assessment process is currently being developed.

New class code on Missing Persons DNA Database (MPDD)

- 5.7 The MPDD is separated into containers. Within these containers there are records from individuals who are known to be deceased. It was proposed that a separate container was created in MPDD for these types of records and that these would have their own class code.

Board agreed the request, subject to APCC approval.

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Action 14/24 Chair to contact APCC Board representatives to seek their agreement with the decisions made by the Board in relation to a new MPDD class code, Gaughran judgement and YSTR project.

Extension of CT searching capability.

- 5.8 FINDS have received a request from the MPS to extend the current process for searching against their CT data set to also search against partial profiles from serious crimes. Following discussion between the FINDS Head of Unit and the Chair it has been agreed that there would be a 12-month pilot with a review point at 9 months.

6.0 Strategic change and delivery to Strategy Board timeline.

FINDS DNA 3-year Roadmap.

- 6.1 The Head of FINDS presented the FINDS 3-year DNA roadmap in more detail to include timelines and information on the DNA quarterly release developments.

Contamination Elimination Database (CED)

- 6.2 The business case for CED automation is still in progress. FINDS are in the process of onboarding Sexual Assault Referral Centers (SARCs) onto the CED, with each SARC organisation to be set-up individually. This will ensure that any contamination from SARC staff can be swiftly detected, removed from the NDNAD, and details sent to the SARC to consider against their processes.

Strategic Facial Matching update

- 6.3 An update on strategic facial matching was given. FINDS are recruiting for a team lead and a technician to support the integration of face, and they are also working on the quality control reports. A governance structure to support this needs to be set up.

HOB update

- 6.4 An update on the HOB Programme was provided.

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Biometrics Governance & Legislative Update 0924/09

- 6.5 The Biometrics and Surveillance Camera Commissioner has resigned. The bill from the previous government, which had clauses to abolish the role fell away when the general election was called. There is a submission with Ministers presenting options, including how the statutory requirement for the Home Secretary to appoint someone can be fulfilled in the short-term. Detailed discussions with new Ministers about biometrics policy are awaited.

An update on the response to the Gaughran judgement was given. There is a need to provide a response to satisfy the judgement imminently. An interim solution was proposed. The Board were asked to agree to the interim solution in the context of the development of a more sustainable solution in the longer term.

The board agreed that they were broadly content as a first step but that they would like to have more information on this interim solution in December and have a better understanding of what the end state might look like and what 'interim' means.

Update on Genealogy pilot

- 6.6 An update was given on the genealogy pilot, it has recently been renamed to Forensic Investigative Genetic Genealogy (FIGG) in line with international partners terminology.

FCN update

- 6.7 An update on FCN was provided. Their 23/24 annual report has been published and a delivery plan has been finalised for 24/25 in consultation with the NPCC. Furthermore, they have been carrying out some work on harmonising the DNA and fingerprint biometric vetting and elimination database procedures.

The FCN are continuing with the sample collection for the YSTR project and are talking to universities about using their previously collected samples. They are on track to meet their target by the end of 2025.

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Retention of Y-STR Markers (loci) on the National DNA Database (NDNAD) progression update 0924-11

- 6.8 The NDNAD cannot currently store and retain Y-STR markers (loci) for either crime stains or subject DNA profiles. The current Y-STR profiling capability is only applicable and potentially successful when there is a known offender, enabling a direct Y-STR to Y-STR profile comparison. The paper outlines a request for the Board's approval that Y-STR markers from both subject and crime stains can be loaded to the NDNAD in the future to realise the full benefits of this existing profiling technology. There are many steps to achieve this.

The Board agreed to this approach.

Annual report.

- 6.9 A submission on requesting publication of the Annual Report has been submitted to Ministers. It has been acknowledged by Minister Johnson and is awaiting confirmation from Ministers Philips and Lord Hanson. The submission included additional background on the FINDS capability and R&D projects being worked on to make the new Ministerial aware. Publication is anticipated for the 10th October.

NDNAD 30 years old.

- 6.10 The NDNAD is 30 years old in 2025. The first DNA match was in April 1995 and it was the world's first national DNA database. The Board agreed that there should be some communications and events to celebrate this milestone, which FINDs will propose.

AOB.

- 6.11 FINDS have a new website which brings together existing information about the service into one place.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/forensic-information-databases-service>