

Justice Sub-Committee on Policing

DNA and fingerprint samples

Letter from the Scottish Government to the Convener

You may recall that I wrote to you in June 2013 regarding potential difficulties around the taking of DNA and fingerprint samples by unqualified police custody assistants.

I advised that Police Scotland had established a Gold Group to take forward the investigation, with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) represented on the Group. Both organisations were working to identify the samples and prints taken by the custody assistants and any implications for the police and for live or historical criminal cases.

I undertook to keep Parliament informed as matters became clearer. I regret that it has taken some time for me to come back to you but this has proved to be a complex and time-consuming piece of work for the police and COPFS. Whilst there remain some loose ends to tie up, the positive news is that although there was initially a potential impact on approximately 33,000 criminal cases, the outcome of enquiries is that no cases seem to have been affected by the taking of samples or prints by police staff.

On the police side, considerable work has been carried out to ensure that police staff are properly trained and certified to take samples and prints, both now and in the future. A consistent approach will be taken across Scotland and robust records will be kept of staff training and certification. The police are confident that this will prevent any recurrence of the problem identified last year.

I hope this is helpful.

Kenny MacAskill
Cabinet Secretary for Justice
21 January 2014