

NATIONALITY SWAPPING – ISOTOPE ANALYSIS AND DNA TESTING – PILOT

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Glossary

1. Introduction

This instruction is aimed at:

- Officers within the ASU responsible for conducting isotope analysis and DNA testing.

This instruction details:

- The purpose and scope of the pilot;
- Which cases are suitable for isotope analysis and DNA testing for the pilot;
- How such testing should be arranged and managed.

No information from the pilot testing will be used to determine or otherwise manage cases, and so this instruction does not:

- Address how DNA and isotope analysis for country of origin analysis may be used in a practical casework environment.

2. Background

Intelligence and CID data reports indicate that there may be a significant percentage of asylum applicants claiming to originate from a country which is not their own in order to further their asylum claim by claiming to be a different nationality and/or to frustrate removal action in the event that their asylum claim is refused.

The UK Border Agency (UKBA) therefore considers it necessary to take appropriate measures to address this abuse of the UK asylum system. Language analysis is already used and has so far proven to be an effective tool in helping to identify an applicant's true country of origin (for further guidance refer to the [Language Analysis](#) instruction).

Isotope analysis and DNA testing techniques are now being considered by the UKBA as tools which may further assist in making country of origin decisions.

A three month pilot will be undertaken, whereby the efficacy of isotope and DNA analysis techniques for indicating country of origin will be evaluated.

2.1 Isotope Analysis

Isotope analysis is based on a forensic technique which was pioneered during the 'Adam Torso' case - a police case in which a child's torso was found in the Thames too mutilated to offer any kind of identification.

Isotope techniques had been in use in many other commercial areas, for example the brewing trade and explosives but this was the first time it had been used to identify the country a human being came from. In this case bone samples were analysed for their stable isotope content and matched against known stable isotope samples (these isotopes are present in unique configurations in different areas of the world and remain unchanged as they pass through the food chain and are finally stored in certain parts of the body in the same way they were on the land, in the air, water, rocks and soil etc.) In this case the child's body was traced to a small Nigerian town in an area about 100 x 50 km wide.

It is this technology that the UK Border Agency will employ, although bone samples will of course not be used, and the taking of the samples will not be intrusive for the subject.

2.2 DNA Testing

Alongside isotope analysis, "ancestral" DNA (Mitochondrial, Y chromosome and Single-Nucleotide Polymorphism (SNPS)) will also be used to identify a person's possible country of origin, as this DNA also has common patterns in different population groups of the world. This is not the same kind of DNA testing that is used to identify personal markers at crime scenes or the perpetrator of a crime. Testing will only provide a clue to the person's ancestral lineage which may allow a probable identification with a particular country. These DNA samples will not be added to the National DNA database.

Women are unable to be DNA tested using the Y chromosome analysis method because they have two X chromosomes in their cells and not an X and a Y. However, they can be tested using the mitochondrial analysis method.

3. Suitability Criteria for Isotope Analysis and DNA Testing

An asylum applicant is only suitable for isotope analysis and DNA testing if they meet all of the following criteria:

- The applicant is an adult;
- The applicant has claimed to be of Somali or Kenyan nationality;
- The applicant has undergone language analysis testing (irrespective of whether the results of language analysis are known, and irrespective of what those results may show);
- The applicant is not vulnerable.

* Vulnerable, could mean an applicant with learning difficulties, a victim of trafficking etc. If an ASU officer is unsure if the applicant is vulnerable, this must be discussed with their HMI.

4. Conducting Isotope Analysis and DNA Testing at the ASU

4.1 Secure Handling and Anonymity

The present phase of the isotopes and DNA testing pilot is not being used for the purpose of decision-making or onward case management in live cases (see [2. Background](#)).

Consequently, no information at all relating to isotope and/or DNA requests and tests must be recorded on CID, casework files, or anywhere other than on non-casework documents solely related to the anonymised testing.

Similarly, to avoid the identification and association of particular individuals with particular tests, there must be no recording of names or reference numbers on test materials, except where specifically required (where special arrangements are in place for later anonymising).

If officers have any doubts as to how to proceed in respect of handling and anonymity (or another aspect of the testing), advice must be sought from a senior officer, taking further advice from Asylum Enquiries if necessary.

4.2 Suitability for Testing

The actions in the following sections must only be undertaken in respect of applicants meeting the [Suitability Criteria](#). If these criteria are not met, testing must not continue.

4.3 Explanation of Process and Taking Consent

- Fully explain to the asylum applicant the use of isotope analysis and DNA testing, by reading verbatim the statement at part B of the consent form (ASL.4037) to the applicant;
- Ask the applicant to sign the consent form (ASL.4037) to state that they agree to participate in these tests;
- Place the consent form in a sealed envelope, marked only with the HO reference and a “destroy on date”, one year after the date of the sample, and store the sealed envelope securely.

4.4 Take Isotope and DNA Samples and Relevant Information at the ASU

The HPP (Human Provenance Project) manager will provide ASU officers with sufficient training prior to the commencement of the pilot. An ASU officer must not take samples unless they have been trained by the HPP manager.

Once the samples have been collected the officer must:

- Complete all entries on forms Y-STR and Isotope (provided in the testing packs);
- Tear off the top counterfoil strip to forms Y-STR and Isotope (which temporarily associates the unique testing reference number to the UKBA reference numbers, for the sole purpose of pilot validation), and store the counterfoils in the appropriate secure file.
- Place the samples in the appropriate sealed tamper-proof bags;
- Lock the samples away in the dedicated refrigerator.

4.5 Sample Collection and Retention

The samples will be removed collectively approximately every two days from the dedicated refrigerator by the HPP manager and sent securely to a laboratory for analysis. The

counterfoils and sealed consent form envelopes will also be collected at this time by the HPP manager.

The counterfoils and samples will be destroyed three months after the indicative findings have been validated against other factors indicative (although not necessarily determinative) of nationality.

The sealed consent form will be securely retained for a period of one year from the taking of the sample, and will then be destroyed.

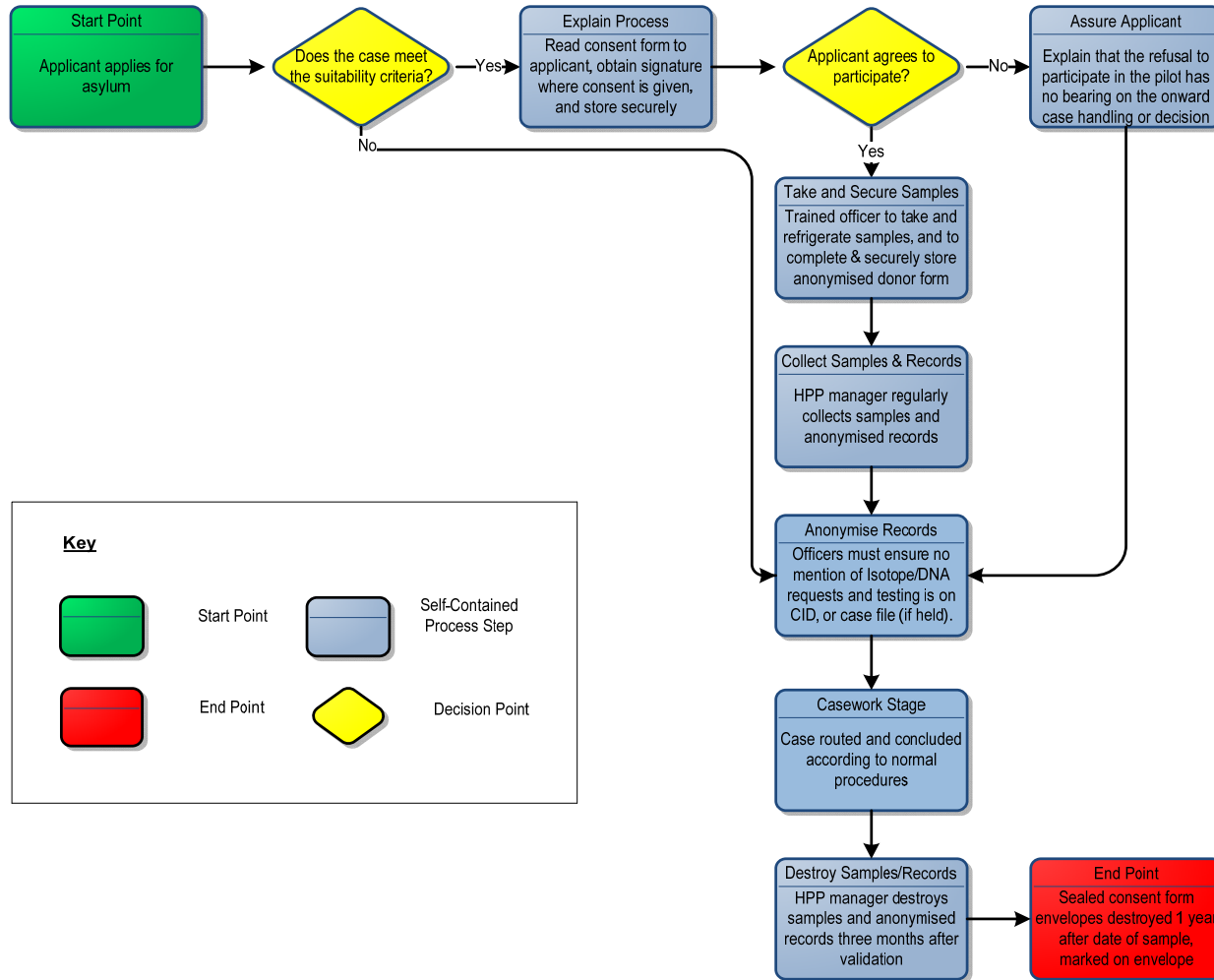
4.6 Onward Casework Action

As has been stated, DNA and isotope analysis plays no part whatsoever in case consideration or management. However, once the DNA and/or isotope samples have been taken and the screening process completed, the applicant's case must be routed to a regional asylum team (see the [Asylum Routing](#) instruction) for the case to be managed and decided according to normal procedures.

Annex A – Process Overview Map

Isotope Analysis and DNA Testing – Pilot – Process Overview

Screening Stage



Glossary

Term	Meaning
ASU	Asylum Screening Unit
CID	Case Information Database
HO	Home Office
HPP	Human Provenance Project
LA	Language Analysis

Document Control

Change Record

Version	Authors	Date	Change Reference
1	BN	27/08/09	
2	MK	18/11/09	Pilot revised. Anonymised pilot resumed.