

**Central Operations and
Performance**

1st Floor
Green Park House
29 Wellesley Road
Croydon
CR0 2AJ

Tel 020 8760 2458

Fax 020 8760 2789

Email Phil.Douglas3
@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Web www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk

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Dear Colleague

I am writing to notify you of the Human Provenance pilot project which is being undertaken by UKBA.

This is a "Proof of Concept" pilot and is aimed at targeting persons who we believe are making false claims about their nationality when making their application for asylum or where there is doubt regarding the claimed relationship between a child and adult who present themselves in the Asylum Screening Unit (ASU). Testing will be starting in the ASUs in the week commencing the 14th September. The pilot is time limited to a maximum of 10 months.

Human Provenance testing analyses the isotope configuration as stored in a person's body. All samples will be provided voluntarily. The analysis itself involves the testing of hair and nail samples to allow us to be able to match results using internationally recognised isotope comparison methods to help identify a person's true country of origin. We will also be testing mitochondrial and Y chromosome DNA, which are collected by use of a mouth swab and matching results using similar comparative methods. These samples will not provide specific information about a person's identity but simply an indication of their possible nationality allowing other investigations to be made. DNA in this form is completely different to that normally used in criminal investigations and is not compatible with the National DNA Database. All samples provided will be destroyed on the conclusion of the asylum investigation.

The pilot will also address the issue of children being brought to ASU as part of an asylum seeking family when they are in fact unrelated. Mouth swabs will also be used for this investigation which again is voluntary.

Initially it is anticipated that only about three samples a week will be collected for the nationality swapping analysis and although it is not possible to say how many families will be tested to prove their relationship, it is not expected to exceed about 2-3 each week.

The project is funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office under the Returns and Reintegration Fund and has full Ministerial support.

If you require any more information please contact Doug Martin on 020 8604 1551.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Phil Douglas', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Phil Douglas
Deputy Director
Country Analysis and Returns Strategy Team