

DNA database has 300 children added a day

More than 300 children a day are being put on to the DNA database fuelling fresh fears over the growth of the “Big Brother” state.

By [Tom Whitehead](#), Home Affairs Editor

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Almost 1.1 million youngsters aged between ten and 17 have had their profiles recorded by the police since 2000, with a large proportion aged under 15, the Daily Telegraph can disclose.

And around one in six are likely to have never been convicted of any crime.

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Ministers are currently reviewing the database but proposals would still see the profiles of innocent people kept for up to 12 years.

Youngsters who commit one minor crime will be kept on until they reach 18 while those guilty of sex or violent crimes will be kept indefinitely.

Jo Shaw, the Liberal Democrat parliamentary campaigner for Holborn & St Pancras who obtained the figures, said: “Labour’s approach to tackling crime is unfair, heavy-handed and ineffective.

“Storing the DNA of thousands of innocent young people as young as ten is unlikely to solve our crime problems, but is a costly way of stigmatising young people. If you’re innocent, you shouldn’t have your data on who you are kept for years.”

A total of 1,087,474 profiles of children aged between ten and 17 have been loaded on to the DNA database since 2000 – the equivalent of 312 a day.

Of those, 412,670 – or 37 per cent – were aged between ten and 14, according to figures from the National Policing Improvement Agency.

The NPIA was unable to say how many of those are innocent but on average one in six people on the database are not convicted of a crime.

The Home Office published proposals for a review of the database in May, in the wake of a landmark European

Court ruling that said a blanket policy of retaining profiles of innocent people indefinitely was illegal.

But under the plans, the DNA profiles of innocent people will remain on the national database for up to 12 years while some innocent children will also have their profiles kept for a similar period, although the majority will have them deleted within six years.

The proposals will mean that adults arrested, but not convicted, of terrorism or serious sexual or violent offences will have their profiles held for 12 years before they are deleted. The same applies for those under 18.

There are an estimated 5.3 million profiles on the DNA database – accounting for about one in 10 people.

The database has doubled in size since 2002 but the number of crimes solved directly because of a DNA match has fallen over the period from 21,098 in 2002/03 to 17,614 last year.

Helen Wallace, director of Genewatch UK, a campaign group, said: "An excessive number of children and young people are being added to the database and there is no evidence that it is helping to solve serious crimes.

"The numbers should be significantly reduced and innocent people should be removed."

A Home Office spokeswoman said: "The number of young people on the DNA database reflects the number of young people who have been arrested for a recordable offence. That is an important threshold as arrest must be based on a reasonable suspicion that the person is involved in the offence

"We recognise the need for special consideration when dealing with young people and have consulted on proposals to remove juveniles from the database when they turn 18 provided they are not rearrested and are not convicted of serious, violent or sexual offences. We have also removed all under 10s."

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