



Police Scotland

Biometrics Unit

Your photograph, fingerprints and DNA: what we do with them

May 2024



POLICE
SCOTLAND
Keeping people safe
POILEAS ALBA

When you are arrested and brought into police custody we may take fingerprints, your photo or other samples from you. Your fingerprints, photo and any other samples are your biometric data, also known as biometrics.

It is important that you understand why Police Scotland takes your biometric data, what we do with it, how we look after it and what your rights are.

What are Biometrics?

Biometric data or 'Biometrics' are a print, impression, sample, or image taken from an individual which may be used to identify them. This may include: fingerprints, a sample of DNA (your unique genetic code) or a photograph taken in custody.

Biometric Samples and Data FAQs

What Biometric samples may be taken?

We may take a photograph of your face, a copy of your fingerprints and/or mouth swabs or hair samples to obtain your DNA profile. The processes are quick and our staff will explain the process at each step. A note of all samples taken (including photos) will be recorded on your custody record.

Why are biometric samples and images taken?

Samples and images are taken to confirm your identity, for use as evidence if you have committed a criminal offence or to help eliminate you from an investigation. For example, to aid an investigation, your image may be shown to witnesses and your biometric data compared to fingerprints or DNA left at a crime scene.

Will you share my data with anyone else?

Your data may be shared with other law enforcement agencies in the UK or internationally, but only if there is a policing reason/purpose for sharing this information.

Scottish Police Authority – Forensic Services (SPA FS) will process samples and retain this data on behalf of Police Scotland.

Where will you store my samples, image and data?

Samples will be securely stored by SPA FS, for example, in laboratory freezers and evidential production stores. Profiles created from these samples, prints, images or impressions will be kept on electronic databases.

How long will you hold my samples and data?

How long your biometrics are retained is based on the outcome of the police investigation and/or prosecution proceedings resulting from your arrest, and the nature of that offence. Full details of Police Scotland's retention periods for images, fingerprints and DNA are published in Police Scotland Records Retention SOP.

Your Rights – Police Scotland

You have rights in relation to the personal data we hold about you. Your rights include (but are not limited to) the right to be informed about the use of your personal data, accessing what information we hold about you through a Subject Access Request, and the right to request this data is corrected or deleted, as required. If you are unhappy in any way with how Police Scotland or SPA FS have dealt with your personal data, you have the right to complain. More information about your rights and our complaints procedure can be found on our website.

Your Rights – Information Commissioner

If you are unhappy in any way with how Police Scotland or SPA FS have dealt with your personal data, you have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner, the UK's independent body set up to uphold information rights. More information about how to make a complaint can be found on our website.

Your Rights – Scottish Biometrics Commissioner

Police Scotland is regulated by the Scottish Biometrics Commissioner’s statutory Code of Practice, this ensures the ethical and transparent use of biometric data.

The Commissioner is appointed by the Scottish Parliament but operates independently to safeguard how biometric data is used for policing purposes in Scotland.

If you are unhappy with how Police Scotland or SPA FS have dealt with your personal data, you have the right to complain to the Scottish Biometrics Commissioner.

The Commissioner’s website has easy read versions of the Code of Practice and complaints procedure, as well as other information including reports to the Scottish Parliament. More information can be found on our website.

**For more information scan this QR code
or visit our website:**

