

STATEMENT TO THE SUNDAY TIMES - 4 NOVEMBER 2005

There has been no communication, conversation, or correspondence between either DCA ministers or officials with David Blunkett about DNA Bioscience.

The Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA) is responsible for maintaining a list of accredited bodies able to carry out court-directed parentage tests. The DCA is committed to the proper maintenance of this accredited list, and is carrying out an urgent investigation into the list. It will be a thorough review, and will include attendant processes and procedures. Any organisation that ought not to be included in the list will be removed. Until the review is concluded, it would be wrong to speculate on its outcome.

With regard to monitoring, the proper standards are those of the International Standards Organisation (ISO). The accreditation bodies for these standards are the experts in carrying out the ISO accreditations. In order to be added to the DCA accredited list, organisations should produce evidence of a valid and current ISO/IEC/17025 certificate, and undertake to comply with the Department of Health's Code of Practice and Guidance on Genetic Paternity Testing Services. DNA Bioscience, which acts as an agent for DNA Diagnostics, has no ISO certificate because it is a referral agency rather than a laboratory.

While this investigation is in progress, all courts dealing with civil proceedings (including family proceedings) have been told about our review and have been informed of the bodies to which referrals should be made until the review of the list is completed. These are Cellmark Diagnostics, Crucial Genetics, LGC Diagnostics Department and the Forensic Science Laboratory in Wetherby. These four laboratories have produced satisfactory up-to-date evidence that they still meet all the criteria for DCA accreditation. We have done this as a precautionary measure while investigations continue.