

## DNA is a 'breach of rights';

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A SOLICITOR has hit out at the police for breaching the human rights of thousands of Swindon residents.

Figures obtained by the Adver under the Freedom of Information Act have revealed that police in Swindon took and stored DNA samples from 10,697 people between April 2007 and December 2008. Of those people, only 2,689 people were actually charged with an offence.

Swindon defence solicitor Rob Ross says the figures contravene a European Human Rights court ruling before Christmas, which said that storing fingerprints of people who have not been found guilty in a court of law is a 'breach of rights' and 'not necessary in a democracy'.

Swindon police collect a DNA sample from every person who is processed at Gablecross police station, unless the person's DNA is already stored.

An inspector for the police, Jeremy Carter, also said that since 1995 six people had requested their details be removed, yet only one profile had been deleted from the database.

Mr Ross, who has represented thousands of people during his 22 years in Swindon, said: "People should only have their DNA kept if they are convicted.

"Otherwise it is an unfair invasion of civil liberties. My clients complain about it all the time if they are arrested and not charged, but unless you want to go to the European Court, there is not much point in fighting it.

"Some people will say that everyone's DNA should be kept because if they are not doing anything wrong then they shouldn't be scared. Well that is rubbish. As far as I am concerned some things are private.

"Unless you commit an offence, your DNA should stay in your body.

"There is something deeply disturbing in knowing that a part of your body is being kept on a register despite not being charged or convicted of anything in any court.

"If I was arrested for being a drug dealer they would take my clothes and my shoes and my phones, but if I was not charged they would give it back. It needs to be the same with DNA.

"There is an increasing trend in official organisations simply to keep information because it can be kept. If you keep information like this as a matter of course then by default you create a big brother state."

Campaigners at NO2ID said Wiltshire Police were making Britain's database into the biggest in the world.

General secretary Guy Herbert said: "In Scotland they have the same method that we are proposing, DNA is only kept if someone is convicted.

"I think Wiltshire Police are acting in the same way as others, which is unreasonable and unlawful.

"We expect the police to uphold the law, not break it."

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