

15

Bio-information: databases, privacy and the fight against crime

Questions to stimulate reflection

‘Nothing to hide, nothing to fear’. Should this allay fears about DNA databases?

Profiling every infant’s DNA at birth and making their profiles available to every government department would greatly facilitate the efficient delivery of public services. Should we do it?

Would you want to know at 20 that you had a high chance of developing Alzheimer’s Disease at 70?

Would it be reasonable for employers to employ only those whose genetic inheritance suggested they’d be good at the job?

Would it be justifiable for public health services to refuse to treat someone who, knowing they had a higher than usual risk of heart disease, had not made sensible lifestyle changes?

Were we to discover that women are not, of their very nature, as good at science as men, should this change our attitude to the teaching of science to women?

We leave our DNA everywhere all the time: is it reasonable to suppose we can keep it private? If not should this alleviate our fears about DNA databases?