

Grant for Research & Development leads Wearside firm to split hairs for DNA advancement



Police forensic teams may soon boast another weapon in their crime-fighting arsenal thanks to DNA advancements being pioneered at a North East firm.

Complement Genomics Limited (CGL) is developing a new method of genetic material recovery that could see DNA samples extracted from shed hairs left behind at crime scenes.

The company, which is based at Sunderland's Business and Innovation Centre, has received a £75,000 Grant for Research and Development from One NorthEast to help fund the project, which will improve on current DNA testing on hair.

Current testing requires the root bulb to be still attached to the hair follicle to give an adequate DNA sample, but typically the root bulb is only attached from hair pulled from the head rather than naturally shed or snapped off. CGL are attempting to be the first company in the world to solve the problem of high quality DNA recovery from shed hair.

One NorthEast Business and Industry Director, Ian Williams said: "We are pleased to be able to support Complement Genomics as the project could have a significant impact on their business and help them to develop a presence in the growing forensics industry.

"The project itself could also have major benefits for the community by assisting crime detection, even enabling the analysis of hair samples taken from historic crime scenes held in storage by police forces across the country."

Louise Allcroft, Director and owner of CGL, said: "We are delighted to have received this prestigious award from One NorthEast, which will support our desire to build our company into a significant innovation led entity in what is a very competitive field.

"This investment also reflects the commitment of One NorthEast to support research intensive companies in the region, which is essential to our overall regional competitiveness."

Louise has over 14 years experience in DNA and human identification testing. Two lab technicians will also assist on the 15-month project.

Currently CGL operates mainly in the field of biological relationship (paternity) testing and genotyping for clinical trials. It is becoming more involved in human identity testing and this project will expand the forensic side of the business.

The market for forensic testing involving DNA is increasing rapidly worldwide. By building up contacts and a reputation in the field, CGL hope to win more cases from solicitors for the defence and prosecution for DNA analysis.