



I Sent My DNA to a Tracking Company: Here's What Happened

Description

Kate Lake, who is affected by the firm's collapse, displays a neutral expression in her portrait.
Kate Lake

Kate Lake seeks clarity regarding the fate of her financial and personal data.

The sudden cessation of operations by a DNA-testing company has left its users in a state of uncertainty, particularly concerning the sensitive data they entrusted to it. The London-based Atlas Biomed specialized in providing genetic insights, including susceptibility to various health conditions.

However, customers have found themselves locked out of their personalized reports, and the firm has not acknowledged any inquiries from the media. Users describe the scenario as "extremely concerning," expressing a pressing desire for clarity on the whereabouts of their private information.

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has indicated that it is looking into complaints regarding Atlas Biomed, emphasizing that individuals have the right to expect secure and responsible handling of their personal information.

Experts have noted that this situation highlights the precarious position of consumers who utilize DNA-analysis services, underlining the vulnerability of their personal data in the hands of such companies.

The Vanishing DNA Reports

Lisa Topping from Saffron Walden submitted a saliva sample to Atlas Biomed years ago, investing approximately £100 for an individualized genetic analysis. This analysis purported to inform her of her DNA composition and disease predispositions based on a questionnaire she completed.

After being able to periodically check her report online, she was alarmed to find that the website had vanished without explanation. Attempts to reach customer service yielded no response.

"The data is deeply personal; I am uncomfortable with their sudden disappearance," Topping remarked.

Similarly, Kate Lake from Tonbridge paid £139 for a promised report that never materialized. Despite assurances of a refund, further communication ceased.

Lake described the situation as "disconcerting," wondering about the fate of her information. The BBC's efforts to contact Atlas Biomed were unfruitful, as listed phone numbers were inactive, and visits to their

London offices revealed no signs of activity.

Even social media platforms showed little recent activity from the company, with numerous users expressing their frustrations online.

A screenshot of Atlas Biomed's Facebook page reveals user grievances.

Image not found or type unknown
Facebook

Customers have voiced their concerns on the company's Facebook platform.

Mystery of Connections to Russia

Atlas Biomed's sudden disappearance raises intriguing questions, particularly regarding its purported links to Russia. Officially recorded as an active entity with Companies House, it has not submitted financial statements since December 2022.

Despite having eight appointed officers, four have already resigned, while two remaining officers share an address in Moscow, which is also noted for a Russian billionaire who previously held director status.

Registering near London's tech hub, Silicon Roundabout, the BBC noted that a registration firm at the address confirmed Atlas Biomed's presence, albeit with no actual office activity detected during their visit.

An office block in central London.

Image not found or type unknown

The London office associated with Atlas Biomed's registration.

An email from the registration firm indicated that they could not facilitate communication with Atlas Biomed "for security reasons." The firm strongly encouraged direct contact.

Despite multiple outreach attempts, Atlas Biomed has remained unresponsive to the BBC's inquiries.

Cybersecurity expert Prof. Alan Woodward remarked on the peculiar connection to Russia, suggesting that if clients were aware of the company's operational history, they might hesitate to entrust their DNA data.



At the Mercy of Corporations

Currently, the fate of Atlas Biomed's customer DNA database remains unresolved, though the BBC has not uncovered any evidence of misuse. However, Prof. Carissa Veliz, author of **Privacy is Power**, asserts that DNA is arguably the most precious form of personal information one possesses. It is irrevocable and reveals significant biological information about oneself and one's family.

In the UK, biometric data is protected under GDPR legislation, emphasizing that when individuals share their data, they place themselves entirely at the mercy of the company, necessitating a critical level of trust.

"We should not have to wait for an incident before demanding accountability from these organizations," Prof. Veliz stated.

Additional reporting by Graham Fraser

Vocabulary List:

1. **Precarious** /prɪ'keəriəs/ (adjective): Dependent on chance; uncertain.
2. **Cessation** /sə'seɪʃən/ (noun): The fact or process of ending or being brought to an end.
3. **Vulnerability** /ˌvʌlnərə'bɪləti/ (noun): The quality of being open to physical or emotional harm.
4. **Misuse** /ˌmɪs'juːs/ (verb): To use something in the wrong way or for the wrong purpose.
5. **Accountability** /əˌkaʊntə'bɪləti/ (noun): The fact or condition of being accountable; responsibility.
6. **Entrust** /ɪn'trʌst/ (verb): To assign the responsibility for doing something to someone.

Comprehension Questions

Multiple Choice

1. What specialized service did Atlas Biomed provide?

- Option: Legal consultation
- Option: Genetic insights
- Option: Financial planning
- Option: Travel booking

2. Who expressed concerns about the sudden disappearance of Atlas Biomed?



- Option: Lisa Topping
- Option: Kate Lake
- Option: Alan Woodward
- Option: No one expressed concerns

3. What regulatory body is looking into complaints regarding Atlas Biomed?

- Option: FDA
- Option: ICO
- Option: FBI
- Option: CIA

4. What did Cybersecurity expert Prof. Alan Woodward comment on?

- Option: Italian cuisine
- Option: Russian connection
- Option: Japanese culture
- Option: Canadian politics

5. Where did Lisa Topping submit a sample to Atlas Biomed?

- Option: Berlin
- Option: Tokyo
- Option: Saffron Walden
- Option: New York

6. What form of information about individuals does Prof. Carissa Veliz consider the most precious?

- Option: Financial records
- Option: Medical history
- Option: DNA data
- Option: Social media posts

True-False

7. Customers were able to access their personalized reports after Atlas Biomed vanished.

8. Atlas Biomed has been responsive to inquiries from the media.

9. Prof. Carissa Veliz believes individuals need to place trust in companies when sharing their data.

10. The fate of Atlas Biomed's customer DNA database has been resolved.



11. Atlas Biomed has submitted financial statements regularly.
12. Lisa Topping received her individualized genetic analysis report as expected.

Gap-Fill

13. Lisa Topping invested approximately £100 for an individualized genetic analysis _____ years ago.
15. Atlas Biomed has not submitted financial statements since _____.
16. Currently, the fate of Atlas Biomed's customer DNA database remains _____.
17. Prof. Carissa Veliz asserts that DNA is arguably the most precious form of personal information one possesses as it is _____.
18. Prof. Veliz believes that individuals place themselves entirely at the _____ of the company when sharing their data.

Answer

Multiple Choice: 1. Genetic insights 2. Kate Lake 3. ICO 4. Russian connection 5. Saffron Walden 6. DNA data
True-False: 7. False 8. False 9. True 10. False 11. False 12. False
Gap-Fill: 13. to inform her of her DNA composition and disease predispositions based on a questionnaire she completed 15. December 2022 16. unresolved 17. irrevocable and reveals significant biological information about oneself and one's family 18. mercy

Vocabulary quizzes

Multiple Choice (Select the Correct answer for each question.)

1. Which word best describes a situation that is uncertain and risky?
Option: Entrust
Option: Precarious
Option: Regulatory



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- Option: Innovative
2. Which term refers to the improper or harmful use of something?
- Option: Accountable
Option: Misuse
Option: Efficacy
Option: Assurances
3. What word is used to describe what remains after something is removed?
- Option: Residual
Option: Scattering
Option: Vulnerability
Option: Innovative
4. What term refers to the rivalry between individuals or groups for a common goal?
- Option: Entrust
Option: Competition
Option: Assurances
Option: Amalgamate
5. Which word describes the process of preparing someone for a specific role or task?
- Option: Offence
Option: Grooming
Option: Transmission
Option: Opaqueness
6. What term is used to express worries or anxieties about something?
- Option: Regulator
Option: Concerns
Option: Semipermeable
Option: Entrust
7. Which word describes the basic physical and organizational structures needed for the operation of a society or enterprise?
- Option: Innovative
Option: Opaqueness
Option: Infrastructure
Option: Regulatory
8. What term is used to describe promises or guarantees intended to provide confidence?
- Option: Offence
Option: Assurances
Option: Cessation



Option: Efficacy

9. Which word refers to feelings of anxiety or unease about something uncertain?

Option: Technique

Option: Apprehensions

Option: Merger

Option: Accountable

10. What term describes the ability to produce a desired or intended result?

Option: Efficacy

Option: Innovative

Option: Semipermeable

Option: Disentangle

Gap-Fill (Fill in the blanks with the correct word from the vocabulary list.)

11. _____ refers to the state of being exposed to the possibility of being harmed or attacked.

12. A _____ is an official who has the power to control or manage certain activities.

13. A corporate _____ is the joining of two or more companies into a single entity.

14. An _____ idea is original creative and introduces a new way of doing things.

15. _____ refers to the process of sending or conveying information from one place to another.

16. _____ in decision-making can lead to lack of clarity and understanding.

17. Being _____ means taking responsibility for one's actions and decisions.

18. To _____ a situation is to separate it from a complex or problematic state.

19. To _____ is to combine or unite to form a single entity.

20. A _____ membrane allows only certain molecules to pass through.



Matching Sentences (Match each definition to the correct word from the vocabulary list.)

21. Parents often their children with important tasks to teach responsibility.
22. The company announced the of all production activities at its plant.
23. Public officials must be held to a high standard of for their decisions.
24. The government agency enforces guidelines for the pharmaceutical industry.
25. The artist perfected a new for blending colors in her paintings.
26. The sudden increase in sales was a surprising and unexpected for the company.
27. The wind caused the of leaves all over the yard.
28. The company was accused of the of natural resources without regard for the environment.
29. The new software introduced an approach to solving common problems.
30. After the flood there was a significant amount of water damage in the basement.

Answer

- Multiple Choice:** 1. Precarious 2. Misuse 3. Residual 4. Competition 5. Grooming 6. Concerns 7. Infrastructure 8. Assurances 9. Apprehensions 10. Efficacy
- Gap-Fill:** 11. Vulnerability 12. Regulator 13. Merger 14. Innovative 15. Transmission 16. Opaqueness 17. Accountable 18. Disentangle 19. Amalgamate 20. Semipermeable
- Matching sentence:** 1. Entrust 2. Cessation 3. Accountability 4. Regulatory 5. Technique 6. Phenomenon 7. Scattering 8. Exploitation 9. Innovative 10. Residual

CATEGORY

1. Sci/Tech - LEVEL5

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