

Consultation on the National Identity Scheme Delivery Plan 2008

Introduction

The purpose of this consultation is to help the Government to proceed with the implementation of National Identity Scheme, including the introduction of identity cards linked to a National Identity Register.

There are a number of specific consultation points that we have highlighted in the Delivery Plan, published on 6 March 2008. Please download the entire publication from <http://www.ips.gov.uk/nis-delivery-plan-2008.pdf>

Comments need not be limited just to these points and we invite any wider comments on our proposals for the implementation of the National Identity Scheme, you may use the additional comments box of the questionnaire on page 9 for your other points.

We will take full account of all comments received on these proposals. The consultation period ends 30 June 2008. Once we have taken stock of the comments received following this consultation, a summary of the responses received will be published. This will be within three months of the closing date for this consultation and will be made available on the Identity and Passport Service website www.ips.gov.uk. The outcome of the consultation will help inform secondary legislation for the National Identity Scheme.

As specified above, all comments received may be published unless the person or organisation making them asks specifically that they should not be published.

The consultation points are set out on the pages below:

From Chapter 2 of the National Identity Scheme Delivery Plan 2008, your views are sought on:

2.1 (i) what kind of information about the Scheme the public may need

Chapter 2 is entitled "How the scheme will work" but it is as vague as the information already in the public domain. As an employer, for example, what is the process by which I "simply, easily and more quickly check" who a candidate is and whether he is entitled to work in the UK? Likewise what is the process for registering with a GP, a school, or for housing? There is no detail, there is only an assertion - "it will be more simple, easy, and quick". Do I call a phone number? Do I use a website? Do I pass my fingers over fingerprint scanners? What information is passed and what is received? What will it cost my business, GP, school or housing association to use the Scheme? Likewise the claims about prevention of crime and terrorism and better delivery of public services are similarly vague. Where is the detailed justification for change?

(ii) what kind of information about the Scheme may be needed by organisations that might want to take part in delivering the Scheme

We could ask why we don't already know what we need in order to participate in delivery. It has after all been six years since the Scheme's inception. Organisations that want to take part in delivery will want to know which organisations will use the scheme and how they will use it - what infrastructure and training etc they might need. This ties into 2.1 (i) - the processes that for example an employer, GP, school, or housing association use will of course determine what is needed to be delivered.

(iii) how and where information about the Scheme should be communicated to the public and other users

Surely a question for your marketing department!

2.2 (i) what sort of advice and support should be provided to the public and other users of the Scheme

As for 2.1 (i). In addition there is no information on what will happen - what remedy is available - when the processes go wrong. Indeed there is no acknowledgement that anything will go wrong.
For example, suppose I am enrolled and the fingerprint scanner at my GP doesn't recognise me. What happens next?

(ii) how to involve non-government organisations in the provision of advice and support about the Scheme to the public and other users

As for 2.1 (iii)

2.3 (i) how to involve the public in independent scrutiny and oversight of the Scheme

There is a sense engagement is futile and could even lead to one being traduced by Government Ministers and other politicians. Early on some 5,000 responses to a consultation, the majority of which opposed the scheme, were counted as a single vote against it (and the Government initially refused to answer questions on this). The record has not improved since! People sign e-petitions, for example, and don't get any sense that their opinion has been heard and appreciated - they simply receive a standard email repeating the same claims that they opposed. Anyone noting comments from Government Ministers and others villifying, for example, Simon Davies and other contributors to the LSE report, or members of campaigning organisations, could be forgiven for thinking that it might not be wise to stick one's head above the ramparts. There are also the issues of the IPS declining to send representatives to public meetings and prohibiting the public from attending some 'roadshows'.

(ii) how potential and established users of the Scheme might be involved to bring independent scrutiny and oversight

As for 2.3 (i). You need to convince people that engagement is a worthwhile exercise. Sadly the past six years (well, eleven years if we include other schemes) have convinced many that it is not.

From Chapter 3 of the National Identity Scheme Delivery Plan 2008:

3.1 Views are sought on the introduction of a requirement to enrol in the Scheme as part of a pre-employment check for employees working in sensitive roles or locations, such as airports.

You would have to answer the question of what it will add to the normal pre-employment checks for such sensitive roles - what value the employer will get out of it. As an employer I would continue to perform my own pre-employment checks whether or not the candidate was enrolled. Therefore what is the point of me using the scheme?
I don't believe it is a cheap shot to point out that the Home Office has encountered 'difficulty' with pre-employment checks on its own staff - one can be forgiven for cynicism as far as this issue is concerned.

3.2 Views are invited particularly from young people on:

(i) the best way of rolling out identity cards to them, including how and where to enrol in the Scheme

Again you have to convince them it is worthwhile - as far as I can tell you have yet to convince the general populace or any significant subset.

(ii) what services the Scheme could provide to them that would make it particularly attractive for them to enrol for an identity card

This is the sort of question that makes people think the Scheme is a solution in search of a problem. You have yet to convince people that life will be easier if they were enrolled. I have never experienced a problem opening a bank account or registering with a GP, so what is the point of enrolling?

According to the Home Office there are no plans for requiring enrolment in order to access public services so what is the point of enrolling? Apparently no organisations (including the DWP) have signed up to use the scheme, so what is the point of enrolling? These questions should already have been answered.

3.3 views are invited from organisations providing services to young people on the best way to deliver benefits from the Scheme to the people they work with

As for 3.2 (ii).

3.4 Views are invited on how to deliver benefits from the Scheme to those who hold a separate identity card, passport or both when the Scheme is enrolling large volumes on the National Identity Register

As for 3.2 (ii). But also why should the benefits differ depending on whether you have an identity card, passport, or both?
Surely the only significant difference between the two documents is one of size?

3.5 Views are sought on:

(i) the ways to create an effective market to deliver fingerprint enrolment capability for the Scheme

If you mean by effective that it can deliver efficient large-scale enrolment - well, from what I understand fingerprints aren't up to the job and the problem will get worse the more people enrolled. As I understand from information in the public domain you have been warned about this but I have yet to see any acknowledgement of this difficulty let alone a 'solution'.

(ii) what needs to be done to make participation by the private sector in delivering this capability an attractive proposition

You have to convince the private sector that participation in the Scheme is worthwhile. This ties into 2.1 (ii) and 3.2 (ii) - will people enrol? If they won't, we aren't going to sell much equipment capable of "fingerprint enrolment".

Additional comments you may have?

I must add to 2.3 (i) a point about the various polls/surveys. No matter what spin you put on it there has been a decline in support and we're also seeing that while there still may be significant support for the principle of ID cards, there are relatively few people who believe the Government can (1) be trusted with personal data (2) deliver on claims made about the Scheme. And to 2.1 (i) that it has been claimed that most transactions will merely result in yes/no answers. What answers will the rest of the transactions result in?

If you wish to be kept informed of future consultation events or be sent communications directly please complete the contact information below:

Surname	Forenames	Title (Dr, Mr, Mrs, etc)
Job title	Organisation □□□□□	Country
Postal address where we can contact you		
Postcode		
Email		

Diversity Monitoring Form

It would be helpful for our organisation to understand more about the diversity of respondents to the consultation. Therefore, we invite you to complete the following information:

Age

16 – 24	25 – 34	35 – 44
45 – 54	55 – 64	65 +

Gender

Male Female

* Disability

Yes No

** Disability: The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 defines a person as having a disability if s/he "has a long term physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day-day activities."*

Ethnic Background

A) White		B) Mixed		C) Asian or Asian British	
British		White and Black Caribbean		Indian	
Irish		White and Black African		Pakistani	
Any other White background		White and Asian		Bangladeshi	
D) Black or Black British		Any other Mixed background		Any other Asian background	
Caribbean		E) Chinese or Other Ethnic Group			
African		Chinese			
Any other Black background		F) Any other Ethnic Group <i>(please specify)</i>			

The above classification of Black and Minority Ethnic groups is in line with the 2001 census breakdown.

Please email the completed form to: identitycards@ips.gsi.gov.uk

Alternatively, post it to:

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