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National identity scheme a step closer to reality

21 November 2008

A consultation has been launched, paving the way for the next step of the government's national identity scheme.

The introduction of the first identity cards for British citizens moved forward today as the government began a [12-week consultation \(new window\)](#) on the finer detail of the scheme's next phase.

The [Identity and Passport Service \(IPS\) \(new window\)](#) has invited comment on secondary legislation needed to ensure the first cards for British citizens become a reality and are issued to airside workers and a number of volunteers at the end of 2009.

Protecting citizens from identity fraud

The [national identity scheme \(new window\)](#) will provide people with an easy and convenient means of proving that they are who they say they are, and protecting citizens from identity fraud.

While the Identity Cards Act set out the framework for a national identity register (NIR) and biometric identity cards, this secondary legislation will establish procedures for issuing cards that mirror those in place for issuing passports.

The consultation will shape the draft legislation to be put before Parliament, most likely in the spring of next year.

The legislation, in the form of statutory instruments, will cover a number of elements required for the early phases of the scheme including:

- who is eligible to apply for a card
- the procedures for making an application
- the sources of information against which a person's identity will be checked
- how the accuracy of the NIR will be maintained
- how information may be provided from the NIR
- the information on the front of the card

The consultation document also formally reiterates previous commitments including the intention to set the fee for a card in 2009-10 at £30 and not to show the NIR number and addresses on the front of the card for confidentiality reasons.

Home Office Minister's statement

Home Office Minister, Meg Hillier, said, 'The national identity scheme will bring real and recognisable benefits for British citizens by offering a more convenient way of proving identity and helping protect people from identity fraud.

'The scheme will reassure us all that workers in positions of trust are who they say they are; help protect the country from illegal immigration; and make it harder for criminals to use false identities and thus help protect us all from crime and terrorism.'

First identity cards

The national identity scheme gets underway within days with the first identity cards issued to non-EEA foreign nationals on 25 November. Around 40,000 cards are expected to be in circulation by April 2009.

As announced by Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith, earlier this month, the first cards for critical workers will be issued to airside workers at Manchester and London City airports from autumn 2009 ahead of a nationwide roll out.

In a speech on 6 November the Home Secretary also paved the way for a small number of citizens to get an identity card next year ahead of the general population and for people to register an early interest.

From 2010 young people will be offered the chance to sign up for cards to help them as they start out their adult lives. And from 2012 the national identity scheme will begin to roll-out for the general population with identity cards issued in high numbers – building on the six million passports issued each year.

Notes to editors

The legal framework for the national identity scheme was established by the [Identity Cards Act 2006 \(new window\)](#) which received Royal Assent on 30 March 2006.

While the Identity Cards Act creates the legal basis for the scheme it does not specify certain details for their introduction. These are being set out in the secondary legislation. Copies of the [Identity Cards Act Secondary Legislation Consultation](#) can be found on the IPS website.

The consultation closes on 13 February 2009. Any changes to the draft Statutory Instruments will be made before being laid before Parliament. It is expected they will be considered in both Houses between March to May 2009 with all final legislation in place well ahead of the issue of the first cards.

The delivery and timetable of the national identity scheme was revealed by the Home Secretary Jacqui Smith on 6 March this year in the [national identity scheme delivery plan \(new window\)](#) and updated by the Home Secretary earlier this month.

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