

Office of The Identity Commissioner

1st Floor, 30 Millbank
London SW1P 4DU
Tel: 020 7160 0094
Out of hours: 07767 478 395

enquiries@identitycommissioner.gsi.gov.uk

25 February 2010

PRESS RELEASE

FIRST REPORT OF THE NATIONAL IDENTITY SCHEME COMMISSIONER

The independent Identity Commissioner is committed to checking that personal information is held safely and that complaints are handled properly. These are two of the themes in his annual report to the Home Secretary, submitted to Parliament today.

The first report of the independent Identity Commissioner, Sir Joseph Pilling, outlines the work that he and his office have undertaken since taking up post on 1 October 2009. It explains how his office has been set up to provide independent oversight of the delivery of the National Identity Service (NIS) and the storage and use of personal information.

Sir Joseph has been spending his first months undertaking a detailed briefing on the architecture of the NIS and the issues surrounding how data is handled and used proportionately and effectively.

Sir Joseph said:

“After three months of seeking to understand an ambitious and complicated programme of work, it would be foolish to give it a clean bill of health, but I’m pleased with the commitment and dedication to producing a safe and secure ID card programme that the members of IPS have shown. More than in most places in Government staff understand why security needs to be taken seriously. They don’t regard it as an irritating obstacle to getting the real work done.”

“I want to make clear that I am a completely independent voice, and will do all I can to ensure that the scheme is run in accordance with the law. I will

continue to listen to as many interested people as I can. If I become concerned about any aspect of the NIS I will not hesitate to write to the Home Secretary immediately. He, of course, would then have to pass the report on to Parliament.”

In his report the Identity Commissioner outlines his plans for 2010 which include undertaking assessments of the physical integrity of the NIR as well as reviewing the guidance for handling of data sharing from the Register. He notes that changes could affect his role but, unless and until the law changes, he will scrutinise the NIS as Parliament requires.

Notes to editors

1. The National Identity Scheme Commissioner (“Identity Commissioner”) was legislated for under the Identity Cards Act 2006 S22 and 23. The Act requires the Commissioner to write to the Home Secretary as soon as practicable after the end of the calendar year with a review of his work under the Act in the previous year. The Home Secretary is obliged to provide Parliament with a copy of this report.
2. Sir Joseph Pilling began work as the Identity Commissioner on 1 October 2009. The first ID card was produced on 21 October 2009.
3. Before retiring in 2005 Sir Joseph was Permanent Under-Secretary of State of the Northern Ireland Office between 1997 and 2005. Since 2005, he has been involved in reviews of senior appointments in the Church of England, the Civil Aviation Authority, the 30 Year Rule on the release of government information and the governance of London University. He is chairman of the Koestler Trust which encourages the arts among offenders and is a trustee of Macmillan Cancer Support.
4. The Office of the Identity Commissioner is a distinct and separate organisation from the Information Commissioner’s Office.
5. A full copy of the report can be found at www.identitycommissioner.org