

Group: Personal Identity
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THE EUROPEAN
INFORMATION
SOCIETY GROUP

EURIM



**Meeting of the Personal Identity Group, Tuesday July 27 2004, at 1000-1200 hours in Room 'B',
1 Parliament Street, Westminster**

Purpose: Introductory talk on consultation for Citizen Information Project

Chair: Jim Lound (Experian);
Rapporteur: Dave Wright (EURIM)

SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS

1. The rationale behind the Citizen Information Project is to establish whether or not the creation of a population register to use across central Government departments will lead to cost and efficiency savings. Only basic contact information will be held - name, address, date of birth, sex, date of death and possibly a unique identifier number.
2. The CIP is at the 'project definition' stage, following a feasibility study that was published in January 2004 allowing the project to pass through the Gateway 0 strategic assessment. The register would act as a hub around which Government services will interact for obtaining up to date information about a citizen's name and address.
3. A public consultation will be a key element of this stage and EURIM has been invited to help with comment in advance of the formal consultation; one of the issues will be how the register relates and/or should relate to the various indices of voters, taxpayers, patients and benefit recipients (as well as other personal identity indices and files, both public and private) already in existence or planned. The key output from the project definition stage will be advice to Ministers on a detailed proposal in April 2005.
4. CIP and Home Office are currently addressing the issues of multiple registers, data quality and repair mechanisms for the CIP population register, including the procedure by which people could check their own records, whilst safeguarding privacy. CIP are looking at various models, both relevant to the NIR and those that draw on existing databases, for quality assurance.
5. The project is driven by deficiencies in departmental databases and the need for current information in order to best provide services to citizens. There may be a business case for some departments to contact people proactively for some services, e.g. to warn that their passport expires in say 6 months time.
6. The CIP will consider a number of potential models for taking forward the case for a unique reference number – this had proved to be a vital element in the roll-out of Local Authority smart cards in order to provide services across different areas.
7. The CIP is essentially a 'joined-up Government' project, with a profoundly different aim to the NIR. The CIP population register will provide a contact database that will deliver cost and efficiency savings to Government, whereas the NIR is intended as a direct, secure source of biometric and personal information from which an ID card can be created.

1. Introduction and Objectives

1.1 This meeting to hear a presentation of the proposals in the Citizen Information Project (CIP) for a population register is part of the EURIM workstream on Personal Identity.

1.2 The proposed register would act as a hub around which Government services will interact for obtaining up to date information about a citizen's name and address. A public consultation, conducted in accordance with Cabinet Office guidelines, will be a key element of this phase and EURIM has been invited to help with comment in advance of the formal consultation; one of the issues will be how the register relates and/or should relate to the various indices of voters, taxpayers, patients and benefit recipients (as well as other personal identity indices and files, both public and private) already in existence or planned.

2. Presentation of Citizen Information Project

2.1 The rationale behind the CIP is to establish whether or not the creation of a population register to use across central Government departments would lead to cost and efficiency savings. The CIP was at the 'project definition' stage, following a feasibility study that was published in January 2004 allowing the project to pass through the Gateway 0 strategic assessment. As a consequence, this presentation would be a 'broad brush' look at the issues and the CIP team is very keen to receive feedback from EURIM members..

2.2 In July 2002, Lord Carter identified potential cost and efficiency savings on the basis that it would be cheaper to maintain a single contact database rather than several spread across the different departments, and use it as a common source of information. The General Register Office (part of the ONS) was therefore asked to undertake preliminary work, while the Gershon Review submitted in February 2004 also put the onus on Government departments to see if it was possible to rationalise back-office administration systems and create a single population register.

2.3 The CIP team is examining ways in which the potential creation of what would effectively be a UK population register (basic contact details only) could help with more efficient public service delivery. The key output from the project definition stage will be advice to Ministers on a detailed proposal in April 2005, with a business case and supporting material, leading up to Gateway 1. The precise format of the database will be influenced by feedback to the consultation.

2.4 Each Government department holds contact information with many of them independently maintaining the information; the idea of the population register is that the citizen will be able to tell government once of a change of contact details which departments can access through a single database (Slide 4). This will generate efficiencies because only one database with contact information needs updating, which is immediately available for access. Only basic contact information will be held - name, address, date of birth, sex, date of death and possibly a unique identifier number. Whether this will mean one address per person or multiple addresses is at present open.

2.5 Latest DWP figures indicate 8.5 million changes of address per annum, and mobility is increasing, including people working abroad for short periods but still in receipt of Government services.

2.6 Thousands of registers and databases exist across Government departments and local authorities, in addition to a number of new initiatives (e.g. ID cards and the National Identity Register (NIR), electoral registers etc – see Slide 7). This presents a huge challenge to CIP to coordinate and match them, and also to keep abreast of technological improvements. However, the CIP population register is intended to sit at the centre of all the new contact databases (Slide 8), acting as a definitive source of information for any Government department.

2.7 The CIP team is working closely with the Home Office to ensure that the population register and the NIR are developed in tandem, although it is important to note that they serve different purposes and are planned to a different timescale. The CIP population register will provide a contact database that will deliver cost and efficiency savings to Government, whereas the NIR is intended as a direct, secure source of biometric and personal information from which an ID card can be created.

2.8 The CIP population register offers a number of immediate benefits, including providing a benchmark for the 10-year UK census and an integrated population statistics system.

2.9 Implementation of the CIP population register would require primary legislation, and would be compliant with data protection and human rights requirements. Timing is dependent on the models chosen; the consultation is scheduled for Autumn of 2004 and will be conducted according to Cabinet Office guidelines. The feedback of this group is therefore considered most valuable, and will input into the issues that the CIP team develop. More information is available on the CIP website at <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cip/>

3. Questions and comments from the floor

3.1 Would notification for changes of address (coa) information be mandatory?

It is already mandatory to supply coa information in certain circumstances e.g. to DVLA. CIP would aim to pick coa up through transactions with Government, though this was subject to discussion.

3.2 Experience from the utility companies shows that errors are generated and perpetuated when tracking meters and people for payment of bills, because utility switches are made between names, not addresses. Similarly, local authorities tracking individuals about property taxes are interested in names, not addresses. Incorporating this data into a central register, or accessing it in a search of various registers, can cause error and confusion. Unless this problem was solved, the register would be unreliable. Individuals using different names, and/or addresses, for different services can also be a source of confusion, although alternative addresses could be included on the same database. The real issue is where the data is stored – but caution is necessary to avoid duplication of the National Identity Register (NIR).

A major task for CIP this Autumn would be to estimate how fluid the data is, and to look at ways of contacting people about take-up of their services. Although this had been done successfully in some countries, e.g. Sweden, it was recognised that this was a huge problem and challenge. Completion of the NIR was likely only after 2008, and would be incremental, and in any case would apply to that proportion of the population over the age of 16. The CIP population register would be earlier, starting as an empty database but delivering benefits long before the NIR materialises. The NIR also has to be a secure biometric database, used only in 'yes-no' mode for verification and authentication purposes.

3.3 The Financial Services sector has largely moved from silo product-related applications and databases to a central customer record to which various products (e.g. loans, mortgages) were attached. Is it the aim to have one organisation, the Government, with CIP at the centre of customer relationship management system?

There is a tendency towards this, with a single customer information management system. But this is not business, and involves different arms of Government.

3.4 There is a concern that legacy systems will survive, largely because of data quality issues, and we could end up with yet another register; what benefit would the customer/citizen derive from the CIP population register? Multiple databases at least hold the possibility that one might be correct! What are the repair mechanisms for the CIP register?

CIP and Home Office are currently addressing this issue, including a procedure by which people could check their own records, whilst preventing unauthorised people from checking other people's records.

3.5 If the aim is to allow Government departments to exchange coa information, is a separate database required once that is achieved? How does the CIP propose to pull together the data – are they aware of every public sector database? The US system does not have a central register; checks for accuracy of information are made using a probability algorithm after 'pinging' different databases held elsewhere.

The US system might be a concept for consideration. The aim is to promote public sector efficiency, not simply joining up silos. This might include holding a history of people's previous addresses. Data sharing powers are available to Government departments, and these should be used to achieve coa

data consistency. CIP is not aware of all existing databases - one of their tasks would be to carry out an analysis of some of the known datasets.

3.6 In developing the business case along with relevant Government departments for a population register, would CIP also involve the private sector?

This is not ruled out, but in preliminary focus groups and market research, some concerns had been identified and people were more comfortable with a public sector approach.

3.7 Is there a plan whereby CIP will manage address data for the national ID cards scheme? Strong authentication would be needed for any CIP entries; assurance would be necessary that any subsequent requests to change address details are made by people who are who they claim to be. How are people selected for entry to the CIP?

CIP are looking at various models, both relevant to the NIR and those that draw on existing databases, for quality assurance. This is an important point, since the CIP does not necessarily require a central database, but for the NIR with secure, biometric data it would be vital.

One of the problems with entering data on a register was that different Government departments had different mechanisms and different levels of verification for the information they enter on their registers. Many will depend on simple contact requests to change address; it's only when a service or other delivery is made that verification is achieved. So the CIP population register has to be defined, and may have to include information about the level of verification of the data it holds, so that departments can have the degree of confidence necessary to be able to use the register. This verification might come from DVLA data, following a contact from a person that their address had changed. CIP could notify DVLA of a change of address, but DVLA may also want to verify this independently.

3.8 Government departments, service providers and agencies operate in a range of public service agreements with different priorities; e.g. DVLA will issue a duplicate driving licence by telephone, whereas the Passport Agency is much more rigorous in issuing a replacement passport, requiring primary identification documents. DVLA contend that 89% of the addresses they hold are correct, whereas estimates for address accuracy on passports are as low as 40% - no doubt related to there being no requirement to notify change of address, and the 10-year period of replacement. So with these different targets, perhaps a one-size fits all register is too difficult to achieve?

During the project definition phase, CIP aims to look at the various quality measures against address, and determine the degree of accuracy and currency required.

3.9 One of the most difficult tasks is to determine the purpose of the CIP population register. The people who are going to be easiest to track - employed with fixed abode - are those who are going to be most suspicious of why they are being tracked! Those who are going to be difficult to track, e.g. criminals or terrorists crossing borders, will need to be checked against a biometric held on a central database. Another issue is where the local authority service is targeted to keeping someone alive - here identification is secondary to that aim. Requiring strong authentication, especially where people have assumed a different name for legitimate reasons, may lead to unnecessary suffering and even death. It will be necessary in some cases to work through proxies to locate a person. The CIP register should also avoid being seen as an attempt to clamp down on the black economy.

CIP acknowledge that people are not easily pigeonholed, and the purpose is to maintain data so as to serve the citizen as effectively as possible. If CIP cannot deliver this, then there will be no case for continuing. CIP will come to a decision in due course!

3.10 What feedback are CIP receiving from Government departments and agencies? Are they saying that they cannot obtain the contact data themselves? Is the project being driven by the needs of suppliers? What benefits are there to the citizen?

The project was driven by deficiencies in departmental databases and the need for current information. There may be a business case for departments to contact people proactively for some services, e.g. to warn that their passport expires in say 6 months time. There are 3 potential areas of

benefit in the CIP register – compliance with the NIR, data for statistical purposes etc., and service delivery. Data sharing between public authorities would also be addressed, as would the case for compulsion.

3.11 Is it not the case that delivery of more benefits would be dependent on the quantity and quality of data held?

There are potential data sharing benefits to offset this requirement. The population register would provide a different statistical base, to which could be added data from other secure sources e.g. occupation details, facilitating joining-up of data.

3.12 is there a need for a CIP unique reference number? LASSeO had recognized early on that standardization of application numbers for smart cards was necessary for universal use, together with a unique reference number for the citizen to access services across all local authorities.

There are a number of potential models for taking this forward, and CIP is looking at working with DWP on the National Insurance number. There is a recognition that the NINO is limited in some areas, but they will also consider the ID cards scheme, driving licence number etc – but CIP is not going to advise departments to change their back office systems and adopt one number. All the different numbers cover a slightly different population base, the question is indeed do we need another unique reference number? CIP will explore the ID cards and other numbers to see how they sit together.

3.13 In cases of adopted children or people in difficult or potentially dangerous circumstances, barriers are in place to prevent people discovering their whereabouts from databases. Any storage of sensitive personal data centrally could cause significant problems. How will CIP deal with this? Name and address details might be all that was necessary for someone to pursue further!

Although the CIP register would hold contact details and a URN, there would be no permission or ability to trawl for additional data; no sensitive data would be accessible.

3.14 If the CIP generated a new URN, would this be added to the DWP database? Would DWP be able to check for currency of contact details against the CIP register, using the URN?

No decisions had yet been taken, and this was one of a number of issues CIP would be addressing.

3.15 How would 'John Smith' be identified from other departments in order e.g. to record a change of address, if there is no URN?

This would be done by reference to previous date of birth, address and address history.

3.16 How will savings be achieved? Departments would have to hold personal information relevant to the services they provide, including contact data.

Savings would be realised because maintenance of the data would be accomplished centrally, and that information would be available across all public authorities. There would be no need to pass data to other departments or agencies – although the transition period leading to full operation of the population register might present problems.

3.17 How would people who used different names and addresses for different transactions be mapped across those different transactions? Is name and address the key identifier for the CIP register?

Name and address details can be used in 3 ways:

- identity
- contact/service delivery
- distribution statistics – how best to provide services

There is no intention to hold additional information to the contact data on the CIP register; the aim is to deliver the best service possible to citizens. Security and how a citizen might gain access to update contact details are also issues being examined.

3.18 Surveys suggest that approximately 80% of people would be very happy for Government to hold their contact details on a publicly-available, low-security central database. A main contact address would solve the problem of multiple addresses. The remaining 20% of people in the 'difficult' category could have access blocks in place. This information is generally available anyway in disparate sources, e.g. a data disk from 192.com!

3.19 Is there an element of compulsion in the CIP register proposal? How would CIP notify the different departments of the new contact details an individual supplied, and who should an individual notify in the first place? A simple, voluntary, internet-based name and address register that was accurate for 80% of the population would be a benefit to most people. Benefit recipients would have an added incentive in maintaining the accuracy of their details, but others may need reminding, and accuracy could become a problem over time.

This is among the issues under consideration, but the designation of a 'primary' address might be one solution.

3.20 Is the CIP register related to the GRO civil registration review database (CRR) or the NIR in any way?

The CIP is essentially a 'joined-up Government' project, with a profoundly different aim to the CRR. Colleagues are proposing radical changes to promote efficient handling of the GRO births deaths and marriages register, including an electronic 'through life' record, linking particular events. This will involve a central 'civil registration' database that will enable the verification of registration records on-line, without the need for paper certificates (<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/groit0704.pdf>). A front-end web-based system will make the administration of the local registration service more responsive. Internet and call-centre technology will give members of the public greater choice in how they register important life events in the future. This would be a vital source of information to the population register and other parts of the public sector.

In the project definition phase of CIP we will explore a range of options for delivering the project's aims, taking account of ongoing developments in related areas of work, including in particular the Identity Cards programme being led by the Home Office. At the moment, both projects have senior representation on each other's project boards and there are strong working relationships at all levels and within all disciplines of the projects.

3.21 Have Government departments bought in to the CIP proposals?

CIP was proceeding step by step; agreement had been reached to explore proposals in more depth, and they would report to ministers in 2005. Talks had been held with e-Government Unit on merging of systems architectures etc, and developments here would resume once the new head of E-Government (Ian Watmore) was in place.

3.22 Will the data held be available to citizens for statistical purposes?

Statistical data will be made available to citizens in aggregated form, in order to protect the identification and privacy of individuals in line with the National Statistics code of practice.

3.23 If the CIP population register became the definitive contact detail data source, would departments be able to remove names and addresses from their own systems and use the CIP register instead? If so, this implied that all departments would have to be able to communicate with the CIP register, which might then suffer overwhelming demand.

Treasury sees this as the real saving; mirror sites could be set up to satisfy demand and performance requirements.

3.24 When would the consultation document be published, and in what form should submissions be made by EURIM members?

No date had yet been set for publication, but EURIM would be informed of the date. Submissions by email would be most appropriate.

4. Future plans

4.1 Although a future meeting had been set provisionally for 8 September, it is doubtful that sufficient progress will have been made by then, and so the date is left open.