

## Office for National Statistics: Citizen Information Project

### Technical consultancy for feasibility study and project definition stages

A Study led by Lord Carter for the Public Services Productivity Panel in 2002, indicated that government could provide better services at a lower cost if basic citizen information was held in a common population register, rather than in many different departmental databases. The Treasury sponsored the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to carry out a feasibility study and Atkins was commissioned to provide consultancy services, which included:

- definition of requirements
- preparation of a business case
- consultation with central and local government organisations
- development of high level technical options and recommendations
- presentation and report of recommendations

The study concluded in 2003 that a population register was technically, legally and organisationally possible and that it would facilitate major economies, efficiencies and service improvements in the public sector, but that more detailed work was needed to develop viable proposals.

In May 2004, ONS appointed Atkins to provide comprehensive technical consultancy as part of the Citizen Information Project (CIP) definition stage.

The Atkins team re-examined the core proposition in the light of the parallel Home Office ID Cards initiative and developed a range of technical options. We consulted with over 20 key stakeholders across government identifying the implications of each technical option and

assessing stakeholder data quality, current and proposed systems. We also provided input to policy issues, business cases and legal discussions related to data sharing of personal details.

In September 2004, CIP recommended that, in the long term, the ID Cards National Identity Register (NIR) be used to deliver an adult population register. Atkins worked closely with the ID Cards Programme and played a significant role in the definition of the additional functionality required. We also contributed to the other identity and population centric initiatives – ODPM data standards for electoral registration and the specification of the National Spatial Address Infrastructure.

In the course of this work, we also identified significant short to medium term savings which could be realised from greater efficiency around information sharing in government.

The quality of existing data, held in central and local government databases, is a key factor in the development of any population register. Atkins developed a framework for objectively assessing the quality of data. We also specified, procured and managed a data analysis and matching trial using sample datasets obtained from DVLA, Electoral Register, GRO, GRO (Scotland), HMRC, NLPG and UKPS. We analysed and interpreted the results and provided valuable input to the ID Cards Programme, DfES Information Sharing Index Programme (Child Register), and UKPS Identity Authentication Programme.

**A common population register - serving the citizen, joining up government and delivering economies and efficiencies**

