

LIBERTY

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ID CARDS AND THE NATIONAL DATABASE: WHY YOU SHOULD TAKE YOUR PRIVACY PERSONALLY

Liberty is the UK's leading civil liberties organisation. We give advice, lobby parliament, and take test cases on civil liberty and human rights issues. We are politically independent and built on more than 70 years of support from individual members.

Liberty is opposed to ID cards, and here addresses some common misconceptions about the proposed scheme.

My driving license has my photo on it. What's the difference?

You know what information is on your driving license, and who has access to it. Your ID card will be a 'pointer' to your entry on a huge database, and you won't know what information is there. A staggering number of public and private bodies will have access to your personal information and you'll need the card to do simple things, such as visit your doctor. Even if you've never committed a crime, or aren't suspected of committing a crime, the police will be able to access your personal details.

I've given personal information to my supermarket. Why should I worry about this?

Every day you choose who to share personal information with. You may give your supermarket limited information in return for cheaper shopping; but you have the right to prevent them from passing your information to anyone else. Under the ID card scheme, you won't have a say about who has access to your details, or what details are stored. The range of information will grow, as will the list of those who can access it.

The database will hold very personal information, including biometric data taken from your fingerprints and scans of your eye and face. It will be the largest biometric database in the world. With the government's record of technological blunders we cannot trust them to safely store our

personal information without making mistakes. Trials of the technology found that one in 25 people couldn't be identified. Facial scans correctly identified only two thirds of able-bodied people, and less than half of disabled people. One in five failed the fingerprint test; and iris scans were unreliable for black people and the elderly.

Imagine being refused access to your doctor when you are sick, or being suspected of a crime and unable to prove your identity to the police. These are real risks.

It wont cost me much.

Yes it will. You will be charged to have the ID card and charged each time you change your details. The Government's latest estimates put the cost of a card at £93, (though independent experts say it will be three times as much) which you will pay, either in up-front fees, or through taxes.

It will be your responsibility to ensure that the information held on you is accurate and complete, but you will have to pay to access your file. You will pay ongoing costs for updating and renewing your information and face a fine of £1000 if you forget to tell the authorities of a change in your personal details. You will pay every time you move house.

If it protects us from crime and terrorism, it must be a good thing.

There is no evidence to suggest that ID cards will protect us from crime and terrorism. Spain has a compulsory ID card scheme and has suffered years of terrorist attacks. Along with France, Germany and Italy, who also have ID cards, street crime in Spain is as much as a problem as it is here. We believe the billions about to be wasted on this scheme would be better spent on policing. Even the government admits that ID cards wont tackle terrorism.

But wont ID Cards stop identity theft and benefit fraud?

No they wont. Most identity crimes involve VAT fraud or money laundering using fake foreign identities. Most identity theft involves someone using your credit card details online or over the telephone. ID cards couldn't tackle these crimes.

Over 90% of benefit fraud is committed by people pretending to be too ill to work or working cash in hand while claiming state benefits. ID cards wouldn't help.

Experts fear that developing one single identifier that will be recognised and accepted by all would make them a prime target for fraudsters and criminal activity. As the technology becomes more sophisticated, so will those who would undermine it.

It's not compulsory – I'll just leave the card at home and forget about it.

It will become compulsory. Within a few years you will have your fingerprints taken, iris and face scanned, and personal details entered on the database. You will have an ID card, which you will need to carry just to go about your daily business.

If you refuse to be scanned and entered onto the database you will be fined £2500, and if you refuse to pay the fine you will be sent to prison.

I don't have anything to hide, so why should I care?

This scheme will either change our society and the way we live forever, or be the greatest ever waste of public money.

You will have to keep the authorities informed of changes in your personal details, and pay harsh penalties if you don't. You will have to produce your card for scanning before being allowed to see your doctor. Your ID card will be your license to live.

Some people will feel the effect more quickly. Black and Asian people are already stopped by the police much more than white people. This scheme risks creating resentment in British minority ethnic groups, who will be disproportionately asked to prove their right to NHS care or other public services.

It may simply be unworkable. With unreliable technology and escalating costs the ID card scheme is set to become a greater scandal of public money-wasting than the Millenium Dome.

Act today to save us from this expensive, foolish and damaging mistake. Join the campaign and say no to ID cards and the national database.

PREVENT THE DEATH OF PRIVACY

Visit www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk for more information, detailed briefings and up to date news on ID cards.

Email or Fax your MP and tell them how concerned you are about ID cards. Urge them to vote against the ID Cards Bill in the House of Commons. Visit www.writetothem.com to identify your MP and contact them.

Join Liberty. For as little as £2 a month you can make a real difference to our work. Join us, be part of the campaign for a fairer, more just society. www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk