

Sent: 01 February 2006 14:37  
To: IT Strategy Project Team  
Subject: Strategy Comments

Dear IT Strategy Project Team,

In the foreword to the "Transformational Government Strategy", the prime minister says that there is a need to "use technology to give citizens choice, with personalised services designed around their needs not the needs of the provider". I therefore find it ironic that in order to give citizens choice and design services around them, the strategy requires a single, centralized identity database. This certainly gives the citizen no choice: they cannot choose to opt out of this database, nor can they choose what data is entered or who this information is available to. So it seems to me that it has been designed around the needs of the provider, not the citizen.

To truly give citizens choice and more engagement, I believe they should have ownership over the data that the government uses to interact with them. If use of a single identifier really is needed (which I would dispute), this could be achieved by having identity data held by third parties rather than central government. Then individual citizens could decide what information both public and private sector bodies would have access to. All worries about the government building some kind of "big brother" database would be immediately allayed.

As stated in section 19, theft of personal data is of increasing concern. I would say that putting the personal details of every citizen into a single database is not a good way to put these worries to rest. This is especially the case when this database is intended to be accessed remotely over a network. The strategy mentions that lack of public confidence in the ability of the government to deliver technology projects. Once the security of the centralized identity database is breached, the public will have no confidence in technology across all government departments. The phrase "all your eggs in one basket" springs to mind.

I am most certainly not against delivery of government services electronically - I am, after all, an IT professional myself. I even work for an organisation which maintains a centralized national database. But unlike the envisaged national identity register, any individual whose data is recorded has ownership of the data and can opt for their details not to be visible externally.

Thank you for your time,

Chris Rimmer

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