

What are the CSIA's aims and objectives?

The CSIA leads on strategy as well as coordinating activities and sponsoring 'common good' programmes of work promoting the adoption of IA best practice across the UK.

The CSIA works with key government departments and agencies in the IA arena, as well as reaching out to other government departments, the wider public sector, industry and the general public, to promulgate best practice. The CSIA's key objectives are to ensure:

- Clear and effective information risk management by organisations
- Agreement upon and compliance with approved and appropriate IA standards
- The development and availability of appropriate IA capabilities, including:
 - products and services
 - professionalism and training
 - awareness and outreach
 - research and innovation

Examples of some of the projects and programmes that CSIA is involved in:

- IA Technical Programme run through CESG – working with government departments to gather IA requirements and acting as a single intelligent customer for industry to interact with
- CSIA Claims Tested Mark – a quality mark for IA products and services for use by the public sector which require a basic level of assurance
- Get Safe Online – a joint government and industry initiative to raise awareness of internet safety for the general public and small businesses
- Accreditation of pan-government systems such as the GSI and the Government Gateway
- ITPC – Infosec Training Paths and Competencies – accreditation and career advice for Infosec professionals across the public sector
- Providing guidance and policy on government IA practice on subjects such as identity management and authentication, in conjunction with key partners such as CESG and the CPNI
- Facilitating telecommunications industry forums – providing guidance and policy in conjunction with other government departments/agencies

For more information about the CSIA go to <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/csia>

You can e-mail us with any queries you may have at csia@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk or write to us at:

CSIA
Cabinet Office, 26 Whitehall
London SW1A 2WH

Central Sponsor for Information Assurance

The CSIA (Central Sponsor for Information Assurance) is a unit within the UK Government's Cabinet Office providing a central focus for Information Assurance (IA) activity across the UK. The CSIA produces and maintains the National Information Assurance Strategy and, along with partner organisations, coordinates and sponsors work programmes to deliver on the strategy's recommendations.

Information Assurance (IA) is the confidence that information systems will protect the information they carry and will function as they need to, when they need to, under the control of legitimate users.

Why does information assurance matter?

ICT is vital to the business of almost every kind of organisation. It brings great benefits to UK industry and government. The growth of broadband and the current surge in the use of internet technologies such as Voice Over IP offers a wealth of opportunities and cost savings. Remote and mobile access is changing the way we communicate, enabling businesses to respond to the needs of its customers and employees, as well as bringing instant contact with those who were previously beyond reach.

But this reliance on technology means that we must ensure that our ICT systems and the information they carry are adequately protected. A loss of data or access to information can cause significant financial and reputational damage to organisations. Both government and business have placed significant investment in offering their services online, giving greater flexibility for customers at the same time as providing significant business benefits. This investment in technology requires us to ensure that trust and confidence in online systems and services is maintained.

What is the Government doing?

The CSIA provides direction and coordination for IA activity across government and the UK. It aims to embed good IA into everyday practice for businesses and individuals. The CSIA has a lead role in helping government to ensure the following strategic outcomes:

- Government is better able to deliver public services through the appropriate use of ICT
- The UK's national security is strengthened by protecting information and information systems at risk of compromise
- The UK's economic and social well-being is enhanced as government, businesses and citizens realise the full benefits of ICT



How does IA fit into the government's ICT strategy?

The 'Transformational Government – enabled by Technology' strategy is changing the way government conducts its business and delivers its services. It aims to harness ICT to best advantage in delivering public services and giving value for money for taxpayers.

A key platform of Transformational Government is the promotion of shared services across the public sector, where ICT systems and procedures are shared to avoid duplication of costs and effort. Recognising that the public sector often collects and handles personal and sensitive data on behalf of citizens, we must ensure that the risks to that information are managed appropriately. ICT systems must be adequately protected with the right level of information security products and services. At the same time proper procedures and best practice should be observed by the organisations responsible for looking after that data on behalf of citizens.

What are the risks?

In the UK, around £25 billion was transacted online in 2006. Customers are increasingly demanding online access to all types of business. However, the growth of e-crime, including fraud and identity theft, over the last few years threatens to undermine confidence in internet usage. A recent survey* indicates that people are more afraid of online fraud than they are of being mugged. In addition, the rapid pace of technological change and adoption, as well as the reliance on internet based technologies, means that ICT risks are increasing and constantly changing.

Ensuring confidence in online systems and services by adopting good information assurance practices will enable organisations to meet their customers' needs at the same time as covering business requirements.

*Get Safe Online survey – September 2006 – 1/5 of respondents feared online crime more than physical crime.