

# Data Sharing Review

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## Consultation paper on the use and sharing of personal information in the public and private sector

### List of questions for response

We would welcome responses to the following questions set out in this consultation paper. Please follow the question order as set out in the consultation paper, leaving a blank response box for any questions not answered.

Please email your completed form to [contact@datasharingreview.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:contact@datasharingreview.gsi.gov.uk)

Alternatively you can send a hard copy response to:

**Data Sharing Review Secretariat**  
**5.26 Steel House**  
**11 Tothill Street**  
**London**  
**SW1H 9LJ**

Thank you.

### Section 1: Background

Question 1.

Comments: Member of the public, though I do also work for a large IT and Consulting firm that has won work on eBorders and ContactPoint, and has been shortlisted for the 'ID Cards' scheme.

### Section 2: Scope of personal information sharing, including benefits, barriers and risks of data sharing and data protection

Question 2.

Comments: For individuals, more joined-up services and less of having to provide information repetitively. Some limited benefits in offering tailored services (e.g. discounts from private companies, or possibly proactively offering benefits by public sector bodies). For society, potential to enhance security and detect fraud and other crimes using data-mining. Also efficiency gains that SHOULD mean that public sector bodies can be run more cheaply for the same quality of service, though in practice these efficiency gains seldom materialise.

Question 3.

Comments: For individuals, currently loss of privacy and potential exposure to fraud (with resultant disastrous impact on future transactions). In the future, or under a

less benign government, the potential for the government to abuse the information held and profile people as 'usual suspects' or 'potential risks' - the resultant risk of unfair discrimination or even persecution. For the government, the potential for a cyber-terrorist (including state-sponsored ones) to wreak havoc in many systems at once. For society as a whole, the risk of our society becoming less free and more like an Orwellian nightmare.

Question 4.

Comments: I'm not sure I can comment from a very informed position on this one, but the joining up of electronic databases seems to me to pose both the greatest opportunities and the greatest risks. I think that the sharing of information across public and private sectors poses a significant risk, as decisions about sharing information gathered by the public sector could be made by people who are not actually accountable to the electorate.

Question 5.

Comments: None at present, but the 'Transformational Government' agenda and specifically the ID cards/ database programme are excessive in my opinion. I do not see any convincing argument for the ID Cards programme and I believe it's been sold by management consultants and IT firms who will make billions out of it, and public servants who have been seduced by their arguments, rather than any kind of sound logic that is in the public benefit..

Question 6.

Comments: The Tesco clubcards and similar hold too much information for my liking. I am quite impressed with their use of shopping preferences to provide targeted offers, but I don't see why they need my date of birth (for example). Also, shopping on websites where the only way to buy things is to create an account - I am deeply suspicious of these sites, though I do still buy from them sometimes. Finally, any time that personal information is sold to a third party who then spams/ junk mails someone is a case of too much information sharing as far as I am concerned.

Question 7.

Comments: Database of which vehicles are insured with information available to police patrol cars (or maybe this does exist but isn't used much?). That's one that springs to mind, anyway. Also, I am in favour of information sharing between medical authorities but I am not convinced that the Connecting for Health mega-database is the answer.

Question 8.

Comments: The ones I worry about are probably the ones I don't know about! If GCHQ/ MI5/ SIS/ the Police (or, let's face it, my local council, who are probably far less secure and conscientious) have got routine access to my phone records or emails without requiring a warrant or other suitable safeguard, then that's excessive! I would also say that ANY official database that has any of my ethnicity, political activity, private interests or sexual or religious preference is probably excessive.

### **Section 3: The legal framework**

Question 9.

Comments: Generally, I think the DPA is fairly effective. One of the main issues with the DPA, however, is when it is used stupidly to provide an excuse for not doing something (a bit when people take a fundamentalist approach to Health and Safety at Work!)

Question 10.

Comments: I believe that the second principle is essential. I don't have enough information to have an informed view on this, but would like to register my concern that with more and more information available there will be increased pressure on these authorities to avoid the second principle.

Question 11.

Comments: Again, I don't have examples, but an interesting societal one is the tabloid 'they should have known' stuff that happens in (say) child abuse cases. This increases the pressure on organisations to ignore DPA.

Question 12.

Comments: I'm not sure the Act needs much change - it just needs to be strengthened in its application. I am also (see earlier) worried about the use of more and more information being required to 'prove identity' and that this ends up in more and more shared databases.

Question 13.

Comments: Sorry, I'm not enough of an expert to answer this one

Question 14.

Comments: No, no, no: I do NOT want a nightclub bouncer demanding my official ID card before he believes I am over 21 (not that I go to nightclubs much anyway)! It's bad enough having to produce passports when not crossing borders (e.g. easyjet flights).

Question 15.

Comments: I'm not sure about burdens on business - most of the burdens I see are on the public sector, and actually I support them. Complying with DPA (unlike, say DDA, Anti-Money Laundering or HSAW) is a 'negative' obligation - i.e. a requirement not to do things - so does not incur nearly as much regulatory burden as the 'positive' ones!

### **Section 4: Consent and transparency**

Question 16.

Comments: I think this is a question for organisations, not me as an individual

Question 17.

Comments: I imagine that it would create barriers, but isn't that the whole point of the requirement? Personally, I want that barrier to be in place!

Question 18.

Comments: Yes - how about requiring public sector bodies to be able to tell you which

other public sector bodies will be able to access the information and why? And private sector companies having a mandatory requirement to advise (or gain consent) when they share your information with another organisation - that would be an end to the blanket opt-out of the 'check this box if you don't want us to sell your info to others [sorry, "carefully selected partners"]'?

Question 19.

Comments: Publicise consultations like this more widely. Ensure there are informed debates about pros and cons, not government spin like the 'ID Cards' scheme - it's not about ID Cards, it's about the database!

### **Section 5: Technology**

Question 20.

Comments: The ability to 'mine' across separate databases held in different formats presents risks and opportunities. While the increasing use of electronic databases makes them more prone to illicit access on a large scale.

Question 21.

Comments: Yes, of course it should - not only encryption, but also how it's shared. Never mind that the famous Child Benefit Info was lost in the post, it's the electronic sharing that poses the greatest risk to interception.

Question 22.

Comments: Yes, anonymisation could help, and no, there isn't sufficient knowledge about it.

### **Section 6: International comparisons**

Question 23.

Comments: Not really aware of other examples, I'm afraid

Question 24.

Comments: Same again

Question 25.

Comments: Well, I suppose there are plenty of historical international examples of particularly permissive data sharing between government departments - e.g. East Germany!

Question 26.

Comments: Not aware, sorry

### **Section 7: Additional questions**

Question 27.

Comments: Yes, the so-called 'ID cards' programme is almost certain to cost several more times than the sum that its boosters estimate, and is of limited benefit. You should ask people about it specifically!

Question 28.

Comments: I am seriously concerned that the government is becoming more authoritarian (ID cards, extension of pre-charge detention, etc) - and I think that this shows that governments find it very hard to resist the temptation to get more and more involved in controlling their citizens, even if it is done with the best intentions. Data-sharing is a crucial area where we need to be clear about the limits on state power in order to preserve individual freedoms and privacy. I am glad you are conducting this consultation, and I hope you won't just let the government carry on regardless of the objections that will be raised in many responses.