



Home Secretary appoints first Identity Commissioner

14 September 2009

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The first Identity Commissioner, Sir Joseph Pilling, was confirmed today by the Home Secretary Alan Johnson. He will take up his appointment on 1 October 2009 in time for the issue of the first identity cards to people in Greater Manchester.

The new Identity Commissioner will act independently and on behalf of the public to ensure that information held on the National Identity Register is accurate and secure as well as monitoring the use identity cards are put to by both public and private sectors.

Home Secretary Alan Johnson said:

"I am pleased to announce the appointment of Sir Joseph Pilling as the first Identity Commissioner.

"The public has the right to expect the National Identity Service to be run to the highest standards. The Identity Commissioner will champion their interests, providing a strong and independent voice, holding the Identity and Passport Service to account and ensuring information collected under the Service is kept securely.

"He will also deliver independent scrutiny of the uses to which identity cards are put by public authorities and private organisations."

Sir Joseph Pilling said:

"I am delighted to accept this post, and plan to be an independent voice in my work towards safeguarding the public's privacy and identity rights, as Parliament intended.

"In the early weeks and months as I work out how best to do the job I intend to listen to the people across the National Identity Service and to people outside the system with views about my new role."

The Identity Commissioner will report to the Home Secretary at least annually on the way the National Identity Service functions are carried out and the report will be laid before Parliament.

All government departments will have a statutory duty to provide whatever information the Commissioner and his staff need to carry out investigations and the Commissioner will have the resources he requires in order to carry out his functions.

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Sir Joseph Pilling was Permanent Secretary to the Northern Ireland Office from 1997 to 2005.
2. Since 2005, he has been involved in reviews of senior appointments in the Church of England, the Civil Aviation Authority, the 30 Year Rule on the release of government information and the governance of London University.
3. He is chairman of the Koestler Trust which encourages the arts among offenders and is a trustee of Macmillan Cancer Support.
4. The role of the Identity Commissioner is to oversee the National Identity Service (NIS) and ensure that it complies with the commitments under the Identity Cards Act 2006.
5. The Identity Commissioner's oversight role does not cover identity cards for foreign nationals, which are subject to oversight arrangements by the Information Commissioner and the Chief Inspector for UK Border Agency.
6. To find out more about the National Identity Service and to register for updates about when it goes live in your area, [visit our Directgov site](#).
7. Any enquiries should be directed to Home Office Press Office on 0207 035 3535.

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