

Reality Check #1 – Government 2.0: The U.K. Government's Database Disasters

Clegg: £7bn worth of 'outrageous' databases will be scrapped

May 19, 2010

Deputy prime minister Nick Clegg today confirmed that over 7 billion worth of government databases will be scrapped, in an attempt to reverse what he called an encroachment on civil liberties.

The databases were an outrageous attack on decent, law-abiding people who were regularly treated as if they have something to hide, he said in a televised speech from a college in London. This has to stop.

Promising a big-bang approach to political reform, Clegg made a list of the databases that will be scrapped under the new government.

The 1.3 billion identity cards scheme will be cancelled, as well as the 3.6 billion biometric passports database. The 224 million ContactPoint database of vulnerable children will also be scrapped.

The plan for internet service providers and phone companies to hold records of all the web, email and phone communications of UK citizens will be shelved some 2 billion of public money had been allocated for this. Clegg said: We won't hold your internet and email records when there is just no reason to do so.

The deputy PM also promised restrictions on the storage of

ON THE SCRAPHEAP:

- ID cards
- Biometric passports
- ContactPoint database of vulnerable children
- Database of emails, web usage and phone calls
- But no news yet on NHS patient records, e-Borders or pension processing

innocent people's data on the DNA database. He gave no further details.

But neither Clegg nor prime minister David Cameron has revealed what will happen to centralised patient records under the 12.7 billion National Programme for IT. This is in spite of both parties continually insisting in the run up to the election that the database, or 'spine', would be switched off.

On Sunday, business secretary Vince Cable told the Sunday Times Labour had hidden 1.8 billion of IT spending commitments before the election, commitments that may be undone.

The projects include a 1.2 billion e-Borders system for immigration, and a 600 million pensions processing offshoring deal.

Before the election, the Conservatives also accused the

government of attempting to rush through a 1 billion, ten-year contract for defence logistics software, as well as an 800 million communications and IT services deal for the Serious Organised Crime Agency.

The new chancellor, George Osborne, said two days ago that day-to-day cost reduction including through cutting specific IT projects will deliver 6 billion worth of operational cost cuts for the government this year alone.

It will not be easy for the government to undo these contracts, as many contain terms and conditions making cancellation costly. Analyst house TechMarketView notes that the government spends 11 billion a year with its top IT services and software providers.

But the cuts may still go ahead, according to Geogina O'Toole, research director at analyst firm TechMarketView. "Suppliers such as HP, CSC, BT, Fujitsu and IBM will have all fingers crossed that the axe won't fall on their contracts," she said. "However it appears that their coming through this period completely unscathed is highly unlikely."

<http://www.computerworlduk.com/news/public-sector/20330/clegg-7bn-worth-of-outrageous-databases-will-be-scrapped/>

ID card scheme 'axed in 100 days'

May 27, 2010

The National Identity Card scheme will be abolished within 100 days with all cards becoming invalid, Home Secretary Theresa May has said.

Legislation to axe the scheme will be the first put before parliament by the new government - with a target of it becoming law by August.

The 15,000 people who voluntarily paid £30 for a card since the 2009 roll out in Manchester will not get a refund.

Ms May said ID card holders would at least have a "souvenir" of the scheme.

The Labour scheme was aimed at tackling fraud, illegal immigration and identity theft - but it was criticised for being too expensive and an infringement of civil liberties. The cards were designed to hold personal biometric data on an encrypted chip, including name, a photograph and fingerprints. The supporting National Identity Register was designed to hold up to 50 pieces of information.

The cards already in circulation will remain legal until Parliament has passed the legislation to abolish them and the register. The short abolition bill will be pushed through Parliament as quickly as possible with the aim of cards being invalid by 3 September.

Anyone who has a card or has to deal with them, such as airport security officials, will be told the termination date in

writing. Once the cards are illegal, the National Identity Register will be "physically destroyed", say ministers. Some 60 people who were working on the scheme for the Identity and Passport Service in Durham have lost their jobs.

Ms May said: "This bill is a first step of many that this government is taking to reduce the control of the state over decent, law-abiding people and hand power back to them. With swift Parliamentary approval, we aim to consign identity cards and the intrusive ID card scheme to history within 100 days."

TIMELINE

- July 2002: Plans unveiled
- November 2004: ID cards bill
- March 2006: Act becomes law
- November 2009: Cards available
- May 2010: Scheme scrapped

£800m saving

Officials are renegotiating two contracts worth £650m with companies who had agreed to deliver parts of the scheme. It's not clear how much the government will need to pay compensation, but officials say there is no "poisoned pill" in the deals and they expect to save £86m once all exit costs are met.

Some £250m was spent on developing the national ID

programme over eight years and its abolition will mean the government will avoid spending a further £800m over a decade.

Former Labour Home Secretary David Blunkett unveiled plans for an identity card scheme in July 2002. By February 2010, the scheme's costs over its lifetime had ballooned to an estimated £4.5bn.

Despite the demise of the national identity card, a separate but technically similar scheme for some foreign nationals will continue.

That scheme, run by the UK Border Agency, is still being rolled out. Immigration minister Damian Green said the scheme was an EU obligation and that the previous Labour government had rolled it into the main ID card programme.

Some 200,000 of these cards, now known as biometric resident permits, have already been given to migrant workers, foreign students and family members from outside the European Economic Area.

British passports are about to be upgraded to a new international security standard but additional proposals to put more biometric information on in the future have also been axed.

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<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8707355.stm>

It is official: U.K. national ID cards scrapped within 100 days

May 28, 2010

The new U.K. government made it official; within 100 days, the biometric national ID scheme would be scrapped, and the National Identity Register, the database that contains the biographic and biometric fingerprint data of card holders, would also be destroyed.

The new U.K. government announced yesterday that it is to scrap plans for identity cards for British citizens within 100 days. The National Identity Register, the database that contains the biographic and biometric fingerprint data of card holders, would also be destroyed.

Home secretary Theresa May said: "This bill is a first step of many that this government is taking to reduce the control of the state over decent, law-abiding people and

hand power back to them. With swift parliamentary approval, we aim to consign identity cards and the intrusive ID-card scheme to history within 100 days."

Deputy prime minister Nick Clegg said: "The wasteful, bureaucratic and intrusive ID-card scheme represents everything that has been wrong with government in recent years. By taking swift action to scrap it, we are making it clear that this government won't sacrifice people's liberty for the sake of ministers' pet projects."

The Identity Documents Bill is part of a first wave of priority legislation set out in the Queen's speech on 25 May. The bill invalidates the identity card, meaning that holders will no longer be able to use them to prove their identity or as a travel document in Europe.

The government aims to have the bill passed through parliament and enacted by the parliamentary recess in August, in a move that will save the taxpayer around £86 million over the next four years, once all cancellation costs are taken into account. It would also avoid around £800 million of ongoing costs over the next ten years, which were to be recovered through fees.

The role of the identity commissioner would also be terminated. The public panels, designed to scrutinize the identity-cards scheme, have already been disbanded.

<http://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/it-official-uk-national-id-cards-scrapped-within-100-days>

theguardian

NHS told to abandon delayed IT project

£12.7bn computer scheme to create patient record system is to be scrapped after years of delays

Denis Campbell

The Guardian,

September 22, 2011

An ambitious multibillion pound programme to create a computerised patient record system across the entire NHS is being scrapped, ministers have decided.

The £12.7bn National Programme for IT is being ended after years of delays, technical difficulties, contractual disputes and rising costs.

Health secretary Andrew Lansley, Cabinet Office minister Francis

Maude and NHS chief executive Sir David Nicholson have decided it is better to discontinue the programme rather than put even more money into it. The axe may be wielded, with ministers likely to criticise the last Labour government for initiating the project but doing too little to ensure it delivered its objectives.

An announcement has been expected for months after the National Audit Office cast serious doubt on the wisdom of ploughing further money into the scheme and David Cameron told MPs in May that he was considering that advice. Whitehall sources confirmed the decision had been made because of coalition cost-cutting and the ongoing problems.

"It was meant to be a very helpful thing for NHS staff and patients but instead has become this amazingly top-heavy, hideously expensive programme. The problem is, it didn't deliver", said a Department of Health source.

"It was too ambitious, the technology kept changing, and loads and loads of money has been put into it. It's wasted a lot of money that should have been spent on nurses and improving patient care, and not on big international IT companies."

The move comes after ministers received fresh advice from the Cabinet Office's major projects authority, which assesses the value for money of major public spending schemes. It concluded "there can

be no confidence that the programme has delivered or can be delivered as originally conceived", recommending ministers "dismember the programme and reconstitute it under new management and organisation arrangements".

Its highly critical verdict said: "The project has not delivered in line with the original intent as targets on dates, functionality, usage and levels of benefit have been delayed and reduced. It is not possible to identify a documented business case for the whole of the programme. Unless the work is refocused, it is hard to see how the perception can ever be shifted from the faults of the past and allowed to progress effectively to support the delivery of effective healthcare."

Health minister Simon Burns, who is responsible for the NHS, said recently: "The nationally imposed system is neither necessary nor appropriate to deliver this. We will allow hospitals to use and develop the IT they already have and add to their environment either by integrating systems purchased through the existing national contracts or elsewhere."

Providers of NHS care such as hospitals and GP surgeries will now be told to strike IT deals locally and regionally to get the best programmes they can afford.

It is still unclear how much money the government has agreed to pay contractors in recent negotiations over cancellation fees for scrapping the project.

Lansley told the the Daily Mail: "Labour's IT programme let down

the NHS and wasted taxpayers' money by imposing a top-down IT system on the local NHS, which didn't fit their needs.

"We will be moving to an innovative new system driven by local decision-making. This is the only way to make sure we get value for money from IT systems that better meet the needs of a modernised NHS." Serious doubts about the project's future were confirmed this year when the cross-party House of Commons public accounts committee said it was "unworkable" and that, despite huge investment, had failed to deliver.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2011/sep/22/nhs-it-project-abandoned>



Child database scrapped

August 6, 2010

A £224 million government database holding the records of all 11 million children in England was scrapped today.

ContactPoint was established by the Labour administration in the wake of the Victoria Climbié child abuse scandal to improve child protection.

Launched last year, it held the names, ages and addresses of all under-18s on a central computerised database, along with the contact details of their parents, schools and GPs.

Hundreds of thousands of teachers, police officers and social workers had access to the register to help co-ordinate who was working with children.

But as well as the cost, the controversial system was beset by delays, technical problems and fears over security.

The coalition Government pledged to shut the database down, saying it was "disproportionate and unjustifiable".

"Ministers do not believe that a database, which holds details of all children in England and which is accessible to hundreds of thousands of people, is the right way to help vulnerable children," the new government said.

The database is being destroyed "using government-approved security standards and processes".

Victoria Climbié, eight, died in 2000 after months of abuse.

The report into her death highlighted the need to improve the exchange of information between different agencies working with vulnerable children.

Announcing ContactPoint's closure last month, Children's Minister Tim Loughton said he recognised the problem that the

previous administration was trying to remedy.

"Frontline practitioners need to be able to provide support for our most vulnerable children when they move across local authority boundaries or access services in more than one area," he said.

"Experience shows the potential value of a quick and reliable means of discovering whether another professional has worked with such a child.

"However, we have never agreed that ContactPoint was the answer."

Mr Loughton said he was looking at establishing a new national service focussing on helping people find out who is working, or has worked, in another authority area with a child.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/child-database-scrapped-2045089.html>