# UK's digital ID plan aims for less data than cookies amid privacy concerns



The UK Government’s proposed digital ID system is expected to hold significantly less personal data than online cookies, according to Lord Richard Hermer, the country’s Attorney General. Speaking at a fringe event during Labour’s annual conference in Liverpool, Lord Hermer reflected on his past opposition to similar ID systems introduced during Tony Blair's tenure but emphasised that evolving technology and changing privacy norms have fundamentally shifted the debate since the early 2000s. He suggested that the digital ID would store limited information, contrasting starkly with the extensive data collected through online tracking technologies.

The initiative, championed by the Prime Minister and unveiled recently at a conference of centre-left leaders, aims to create a secure and mandatory identity verification system for those working in the UK by 2029. According to Sir Keir Starmer, one of the policy’s core motivations is to deter illegal migrant workers by making it harder to work without proper authorization. The scheme would allow the government to automatically collect data on employment status to better enforce immigration rules, addressing concerns about illegal working practices highlighted by recent enforcement raids.

However, the proposals have met with significant public resistance, with over two million people signing a petition opposing the plan on grounds of privacy infringement and fears of increased state surveillance. Critics from opposition parties have described the scheme as politically motivated and unlikely to be effective in curbing illegal immigration. Labour backbencher Bell Ribeiro-Addy noted that much of the backlash stems from misunderstandings about the policy's intent and questioned whether it would truly impact the shadow economy. Sir Keir, however, maintains confidence in the system, asserting that mandatory digital ID will be crucial for lawful employment verification.

The government envisions the digital ID working similarly to existing smartphone-based applications, such as contactless payment or the NHS app, but clarified that individuals would not be compelled to carry physical ID or present it on demand. This approach aligns with broader government consultations that have sought public input on digital identity development, emphasising the need to balance security, privacy, and accessibility. Official responses from these consultations have reaffirmed commitments to data protection, user trust, and ensuring that no one is denied access to services due to digital ID requirements, with alternative access pathways for those unable to use digital verification.

Public attitude surveys conducted as part of these consultations reveal significant privacy concerns remain a major barrier to acceptance of digital identity systems. Many respondents, particularly younger demographics, expressed worries over data sharing and potential misuse, highlighting a need for transparent communication and robust security protocols to build confidence in the new infrastructure. The government’s sectoral analysis underlines the importance of addressing these concerns to facilitate widespread adoption while respecting individual privacy rights.

In sum, while the proposed digital ID system aims to modernise the UK’s approach to identity verification with a focus on limiting data collection and protecting privacy, it faces a contentious political and public landscape. The government continues to navigate between the goals of improving immigration control, enhancing security, and safeguarding civil liberties as the scheme moves towards potential implementation.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/digital-ids-will-likely-hold-less-data-than-online-cookies-attorney-general-THH6LWCYEJNWZADBMQX3M7YJKE/), [[2]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/digital-ids-will-likely-hold-less-data-than-online-cookies-attorney-general-THH6LWCYEJNWZADBMQX3M7YJKE/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/digital-ids-will-likely-hold-less-data-than-online-cookies-attorney-general-THH6LWCYEJNWZADBMQX3M7YJKE/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/digital-ids-will-likely-hold-less-data-than-online-cookies-attorney-general-THH6LWCYEJNWZADBMQX3M7YJKE/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/digital-ids-will-likely-hold-less-data-than-online-cookies-attorney-general-THH6LWCYEJNWZADBMQX3M7YJKE/), [[3]](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/digital-identity-and-attributes-consultation/digital-identity-and-attributes-consultation), [[4]](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/digital-identity-and-attributes-consultation/outcome/government-response-to-the-digital-identity-and-attributes-consultation), [[7]](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/digital-identity-and-attributes-consultation/outcome/government-response-to-the-digital-identity-and-attributes-consultation)
* Paragraph 5 – [[5]](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/digital-identity-sectoral-analysis-report-2025/digital-identity-sectoral-analysis-2025), [[6]](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/digital-identity-sectoral-analysis-report-2025/digital-identity-sectoral-analysis-2025)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/digital-ids-will-likely-hold-less-data-than-online-cookies-attorney-general-THH6LWCYEJNWZADBMQX3M7YJKE/), [[3]](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/digital-identity-and-attributes-consultation/digital-identity-and-attributes-consultation), [[4]](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/digital-identity-and-attributes-consultation/outcome/government-response-to-the-digital-identity-and-attributes-consultation)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/digital-ids-will-likely-hold-less-data-than-online-cookies-attorney-general-THH6LWCYEJNWZADBMQX3M7YJKE/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/digital-ids-will-likely-hold-less-data-than-online-cookies-attorney-general-THH6LWCYEJNWZADBMQX3M7YJKE/> - Lord Richard Hermer, the UK's Attorney General, stated that digital IDs would likely hold less personal data than online cookies. He acknowledged his previous opposition to such systems but noted that technological advancements have changed privacy considerations since the early 2000s. The proposed digital ID system aims to limit personal data collection, addressing concerns about privacy and surveillance. The initiative is part of broader government efforts to modernise state infrastructure and improve data management, with a focus on balancing security and individual privacy rights.
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/digital-identity-and-attributes-consultation/digital-identity-and-attributes-consultation> - The UK government conducted a consultation on digital identity and attributes, seeking public and stakeholder input on the development of digital identity systems. The consultation aimed to gather views on the use of digital identities, the role of government-held data, and the establishment of a trust framework to ensure privacy and security. The responses highlighted the need for authoritative government data, trust, and transparency in digital identity schemes. The government committed to addressing concerns and ensuring that digital identities facilitate access to services without hindering legitimate users.
4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/digital-identity-and-attributes-consultation/outcome/government-response-to-the-digital-identity-and-attributes-consultation> - The UK government's response to the digital identity and attributes consultation outlines plans to develop digital identities that help individuals access services securely. The response emphasises the importance of privacy, data protection, and user trust. It addresses concerns about surveillance and misuse of personal data, stating that no one should be denied access to services due to digital identity requirements. The government plans to ensure alternative pathways for those unable to use digital checks, aiming to balance innovation with safeguarding individual rights.
5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/digital-identity-sectoral-analysis-report-2025/digital-identity-sectoral-analysis-2025> - The UK's Digital Identity Sectoral Analysis 2025 report examines public attitudes towards digital identity systems. It reveals that privacy concerns are a significant barrier to adoption, with a notable percentage of respondents expressing apprehension about sharing personal data. The report highlights demographic variations, noting that younger individuals are more likely to cite access issues as reasons for not using digital identity. The findings underscore the need for transparent communication and robust security measures to build public trust in digital identity initiatives.
6. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/digital-identity-sectoral-analysis-report-2025/digital-identity-sectoral-analysis-2025> - The UK's Digital Identity Sectoral Analysis 2025 report examines public attitudes towards digital identity systems. It reveals that privacy concerns are a significant barrier to adoption, with a notable percentage of respondents expressing apprehension about sharing personal data. The report highlights demographic variations, noting that younger individuals are more likely to cite access issues as reasons for not using digital identity. The findings underscore the need for transparent communication and robust security measures to build public trust in digital identity initiatives.
7. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/digital-identity-and-attributes-consultation/outcome/government-response-to-the-digital-identity-and-attributes-consultation> - The UK government's response to the digital identity and attributes consultation outlines plans to develop digital identities that help individuals access services securely. The response emphasises the importance of privacy, data protection, and user trust. It addresses concerns about surveillance and misuse of personal data, stating that no one should be denied access to services due to digital identity requirements. The government plans to ensure alternative pathways for those unable to use digital checks, aiming to balance innovation with safeguarding individual rights.