

24 September 2025

The Prime Minister
Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer MP
10 Downing Street
Westminster
London
SW1A 2AA

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing to you as a group of human rights, civil liberties, digital rights, migrants rights and racial justice organisations following reports that the Government is considering proposals for a universal, mandatory digital ID system. We strongly urge you to scrap any plans to introduce mandatory digital ID, for a number of rights-based reasons that we have outlined below.

A mandatory digital ID scheme could be implemented in a way that is uniquely harmful to privacy, equality and civil liberties. It would require the population to surrender vast amounts of personal data to be amassed into population-wide databases which could be amalgamated, searched, and analysed to monitor, track, and profile individuals.¹ A database which joins up all of our government-held records and logs our interactions with the state would be a treasure trove for hackers and malign actors, leaving us vulnerable to catastrophic data security breaches.² Citizens should not be forced to surrender their privacy, security and data rights in order to access basic services.

In addition, mandatory digital ID would fundamentally change the relationship between the population and the state by requiring frequent identity checks as we navigate our daily lives. Although the current digital ID proposals are being considered in the context of immigration, there is no guarantee that a future government would not make digital ID a requirement to access a range of public and private services.

Mandatory digital ID is highly unlikely to achieve the Government's objective of tackling unauthorised immigration. The proposed schemes fundamentally

¹ Big Brother Watch, 'Checkpoint Britain: The Dangers of Digital ID and Why Privacy Must Be Protected,' <https://bigbrotherwatch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Checkpoint-Britain.pdf>, p33-36.

² ID Tech Wire, 'UK One Login Digital ID System Faces Major Security Breach Allegations,' 14 April 2025, <https://idtechwire.com/uk-one-login-digital-id-system-faces-major-security-breach-allegations/>.

misunderstand the “pull factors” that drive migration to the UK and would do very little to tackle criminal people-smuggling gangs or employers and landlords who operate “off-the-books.” Instead, it would push unauthorised migrants further into the shadows, into even more precarious work and unsafe housing. Mandatory ID schemes in countries such as France have not deterred unauthorised migrants, who continue to work in the underground economy.³ Subjecting millions of law-abiding people to rights-infringing digital ID in the hope of managing a small minority would be grossly disproportionate, particularly where there is little evidence that it would produce its desired aim.

The inaccuracies and problems that have plagued the eVisa scheme – which is already mandatory for more than four million legal migrants – suggest that rolling out a mandatory digital ID scheme for the rest of the population would likely be accompanied by widespread system failures, bureaucratic mistakes, and law-abiding people being subjected to undue stress and anxiety.⁴ If digital ID were mandatory, these types of errors would be reproduced and amplified on a population-wide scale. It is likely that marginalised groups, such as the digitally excluded, disabled people and elderly people would be disproportionately impacted by these problems and risk being locked out from accessing essential services.

Rushing into implementing a nationwide digital ID scheme would be a short-sighted mistake with serious consequences for our fundamental rights and freedoms. The British public has reliably rejected every attempt to mandate ID cards since the 1950s, and more than 90,000 people have already signed a petition calling for you to reject the current proposals for mandatory digital ID.⁵ Having assured the public following last year’s election that digital ID was not in the government’s plans, introducing digital ID through the backdoor, particularly in the absence of parliamentary oversight or meaningful public consultation, would be both unpopular and undemocratic.

Whilst mandatory digital ID might assist the Government to administer itself, it is unlikely to benefit the public. On the contrary, it would shift the balance of power towards the state with dangerous implications for our security, rights and freedoms.

³ The Nation, ‘France’s Undocumented Migrants are Fighting for their Rights’ 31 December 2019, <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/france-migrants-macron-refugees/>.

⁴ The 3 Million, ‘eVisa Problems,’ 1 August 2025, <https://the3million.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/t3m-report-evisa-problems-2025-Q2-01Aug2025.pdf>.

⁵ 38 Degrees Petition, Reject plans for a mandatory BritCard (digital ID), https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/reject-plans-for-a-mandatory-britcard-digital-id?source=twitter&utm_medium=socialshare&utm_source=twitter&share=2b4c1358-9cbf-49bb-93f2-6bdc28ccb24c.

We urge you to abandon any plans for a mandatory digital ID scheme for all UK citizens and residents and ask that you meet with us, as you have with those advocating for digital ID, to discuss the rights and equalities implications of these proposals.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely yours,

Rebecca Vincent, Interim Director, Big Brother Watch

Quinn McKew, Executive Director, Article 19

Jeni Tennison, Executive Director, Connected by Data

Akiko Hart, Director, Liberty

Phil Booth, Coordinator, medConfidential; National Coordinator, NO2ID (2004-2011)

Jim Killock, Executive Director, Open Rights Group

Dr Shabna Begum, CEO, The Runnymede Trust

Tom Brake, Director, Unlock Democracy