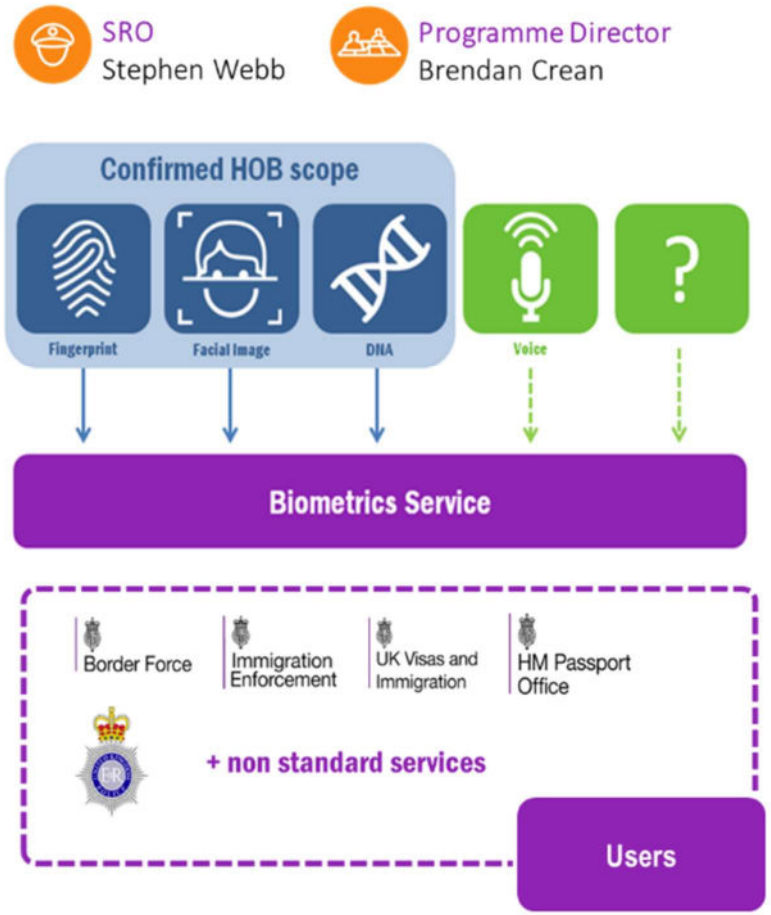
Home Office Biometrics (HOB) Programme Brief



1. The HOB Programme has a responsibility to provide biometrics related services to a wide range of Home Office and government users. This is currently Departments and agencies involved in immigration and law enforcement.



- Significantly improved accuracy and public outcomes
- Bringing data collections and workflows together
- Logically separating the data collections with role-based access controls
- Developing strong governance around the management of data
- Providing a common biometric service for cross-government stakeholders

2. The systems in scope in the HOB Programme that provide such biometric services are:

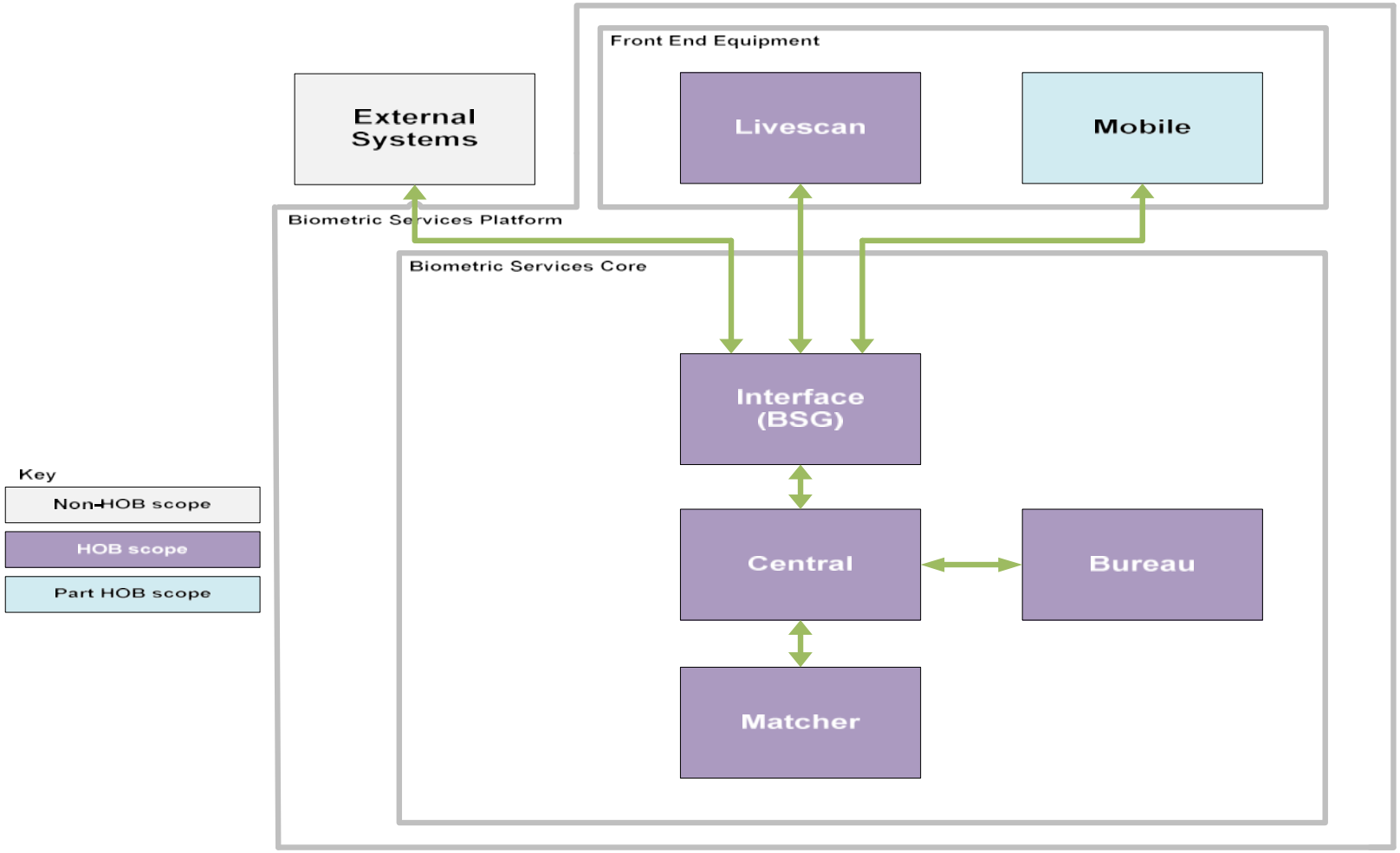
   - **IDENT1 (Law Enforcement and Security Biometrics System)** – provides biometric enrolment, identification and identity management services within the law enforcement domain, principally for arrestees in the UK, but also covering other specialist data sets.
   - **Immigration and Asylum Biometrics System (IABS)** – provides biometric enrolment, identification, identity management and verification services within the immigration and citizenship domains. E.g. for visa applicants to the UK, biometric residency permit applicants, asylum applicants and passport applicants.
   - **National DNA Database (NDNAD)** – the NDNAD holds DNA profiles of subjects in criminal cases, some of whom have not been convicted of a crime and profiles of victims, as well as marks from crime scenes. The database also holds DNA profiles of vulnerable persons who fear they may be victims of a crime; volunteers who may be vulnerable to attack themselves if their details become known to the wider public; and police officers for elimination purposes. The missing persons and the contamination elimination databases are currently held on a different infrastructure. However, it is planned that the strategic DNA Service will store all data in a single database made up of multiple, logically separated collections.
   - **Biometric Accuracy Test (BAT) environment** – through the Biometric Accuracy Testing (BAT) environment, HOB has undertaken a full and comprehensive approach to testing to select the most advantageous matcher software, and to provide wider assurances of future biometric capabilities

3. HOB is transforming the way it delivers biometric capabilities by moving to a modernised, common platform, supported by a new commercial structure. The current biometric capabilities are delivered through old and siloed systems for fingerprints and face which are now technically complex and expensive to run. The new common platform, delivered through series of phased projects under separate commercial contracts, will offer greater flexibility in how biometrics capabilities are delivered, both commercially and technically, to support identification services, crime scene investigation, visa applications, passport applications, border control and counter-terrorism (for Immigration, Borders, Passports and Law Enforcement).

4. What this does not mean is that the transformation underway through the HOB Programme will be combining all data into one mega-database. While all the collections of data will be physically in one system, they will be logically separated with role-based access controls (RBAC) allowing user access only to the data and activities they are permitted to access.

HOB Programme in detail

5. The Biometric Services Core, Front End Equipment and sub-system elements that make up the HOB Programme are shown in the diagram below.

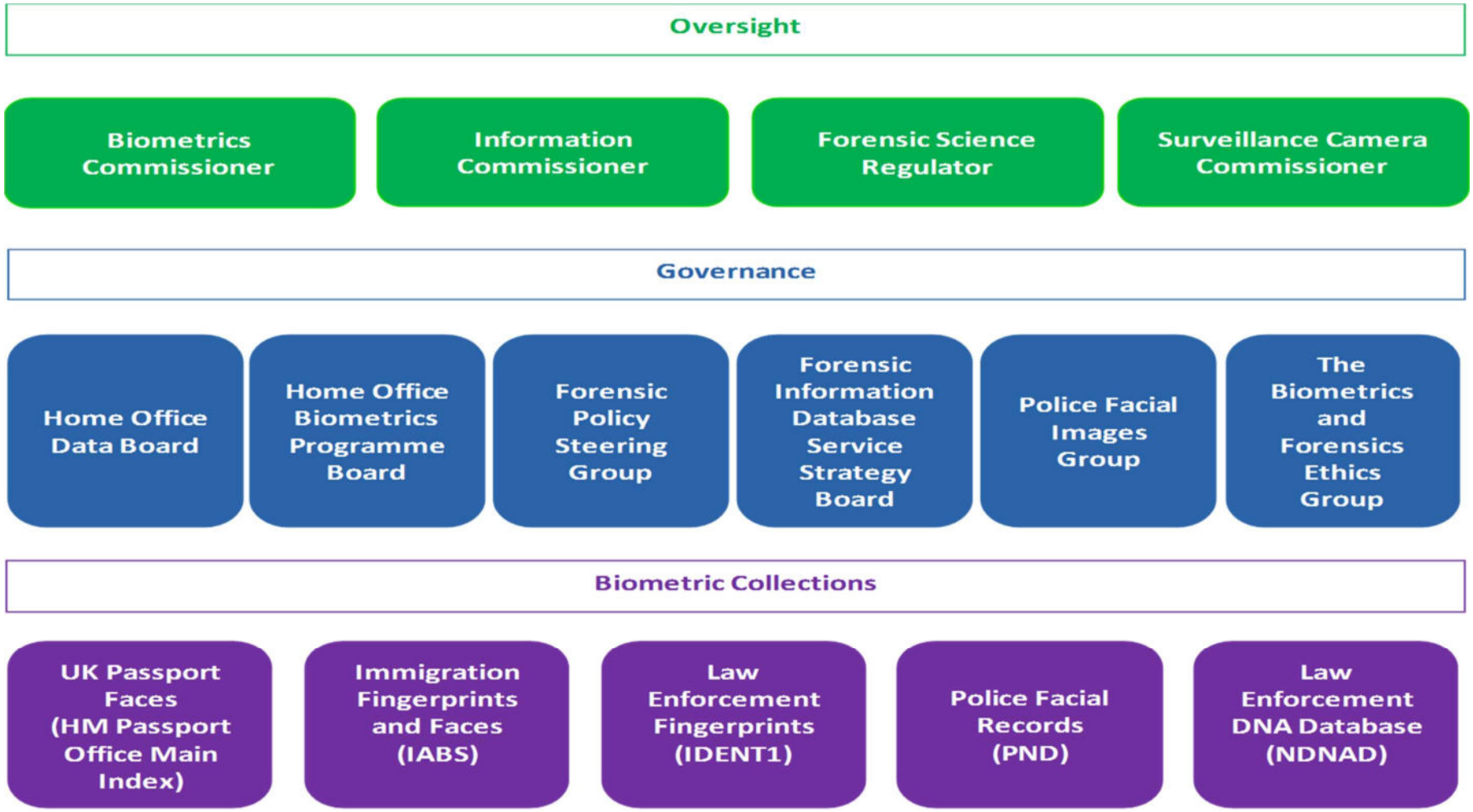


6. The main projects within the scope of the HOB Programme are as follows:

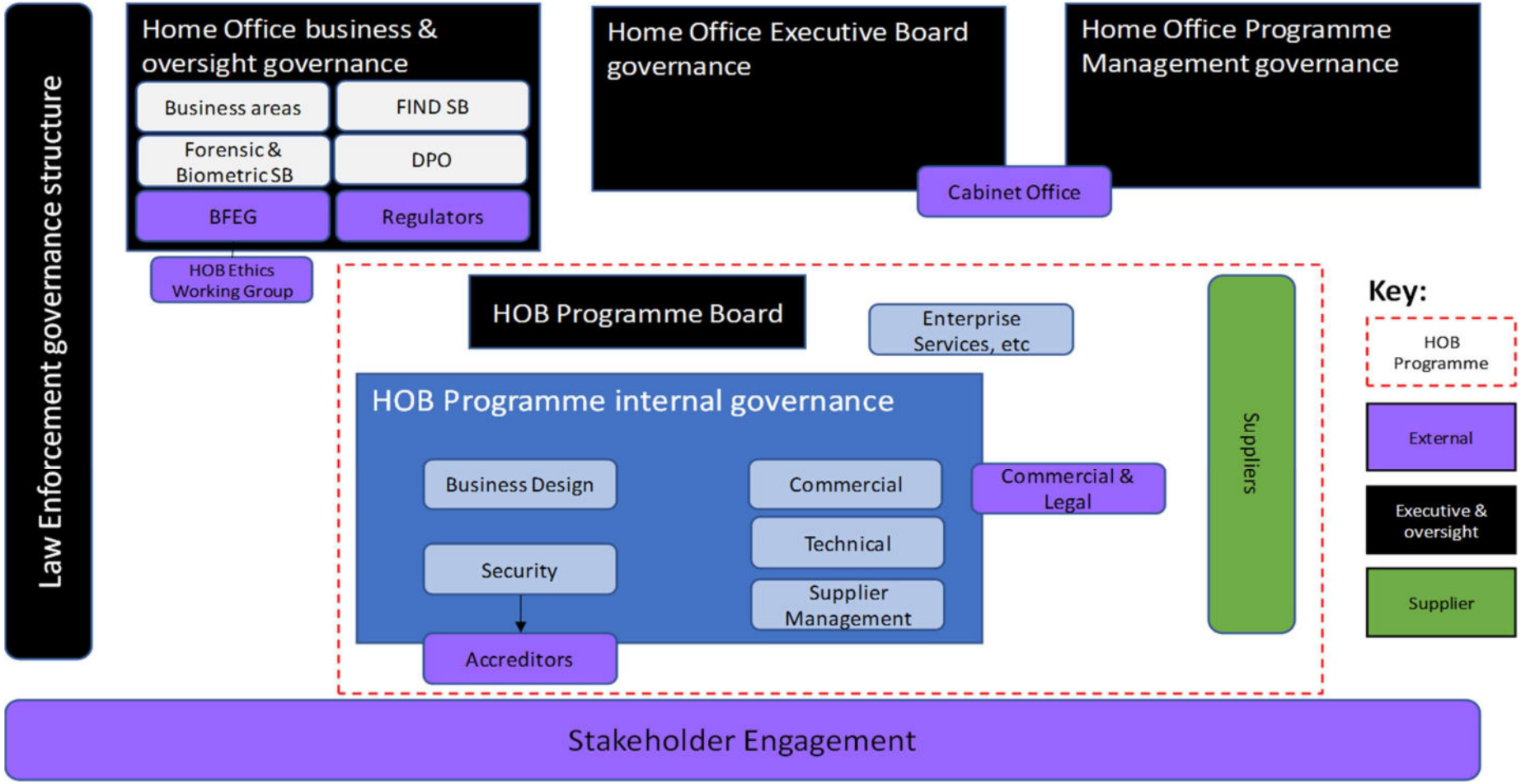
Biometric Services Gateway (BSG)	The universal 'front door' to HOB services: • Reduces the complexity of the IT environment by introducing standards and common formats. • Reduces the future cost of integration between HOB and other systems/services. • Reduces ongoing run costs and increases system robustness, resilience and security of data.
Strategic Matcher	• Will provide a Biometric Matching Service delivering biometric search, identification and verification capabilities across multiple biometric modalities (initially fingerprints and face) and for multiple data sets (immigration, citizenship, law enforcement, etc). • The first algorithm will be a new matching capability for law enforcement for fingerprints which will enhance that capability, making matching faster and more accurate. • The service has been procured and contracts awarded. The new system will be live in late spring 2019.
Strategic Central & Bureau Project	• Creation of a new HOB central platform which is at the heart of the strategic Biometric Service. This Central platform is the location of the key biometric data stores and also workflow which orchestrates all the other sub-systems. • While all the collections of data will be physically in one system they will however be logically separated with role-based access controls (RBAC) allowing user access only to the data and activities they are permitted to access. • The bureau platform is part of the same project and provides a platform onto which the bureau tools and applications will be deployed. • There is an active procurement underway for the SCBP
Strategic Mobile	• Enabling Police and Immigration to access Law Enforcement and Immigration biometric services from mobile devices as a data service consumed within operational mobile applications. • This marks a new approach for HOB as, instead of HOB providing the devices, Police Forces determine which mobile device to use. Forces may put the apps onto existing, work issued mobile devices. There is also the need to have a biometric peripheral for capturing the prints – this is a small device that attaches to the phone in order to take the scan of the index fingerprints from the individual. • Strategic Mobile began to roll out in February 2018
Strategic DNA	• This project, to be delivered in 2019, will provide a secure, accredited and legislatively compliant profile storage, search and matching facility to replace the existing database. It will maintain current capabilities and the functionality available to the user today. • The solution will also deliver full, end-to-end automation for routine transactions, ensuring a more responsive service and delivering business efficiency. • The Strategic DNA project will also improve resilience of the platform and, in addition to future-proofing the solution, will provide a flexibility that supports customer process change, with a data model and components that are customisable. • The new system is unlikely to move onto the strategic biometric platform in the lifetime of the programme.
International data sharing	• HOB is delivering part of the UK's commitments to the Prüm Council Decisions, specifically Prüm Fingerprints – sharing fingerprint records with EU nations for the purpose of law enforcement and counter terrorism. • Prüm DNA, which will see DNA records shared with EU partners, is being delivered in partnership with the Metropolitan Police Service, adapting and reusing the solution which has been piloted.

Home Office Biometrics Strategy and HOB governance

7. The Home Office Biometrics Strategy published in June 2018 described the current governance, oversight and standards in place to oversee the Home Office's use of biometric data



8. The more detailed governance structure for the HOB Programme is outlined in the diagram below:



HOB approach to privacy and ethics

9. From an early stage HOB recognised the importance of maximising public safety and efficiency of delivery to the public sector whilst protecting the privacy of the individual and addressing any potential impact of data aggregation. HOB made a commitment to undertake a programme Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA), consisting of a suite of individual PIAs for each project as well as an overarching programme level PIA in the Home Office Biometrics Business Case. This commitment is also repeated in the Home Office Biometrics Strategy.

10. HOB recognises that there are significant ethical issues to consider in the collection and use of biometric information. At the request of HOB, in 2016 the independent Biometric and Forensic Ethics Group established a working group to provide robust ethical and privacy advice and challenge on each HOB project PIA.

11. Now that the Data Protection Act 2018 has come into force, the HOB Programme PIA and existing project PIAs (which have been developed and approved under the 1998 Act as the programme has been in existence since 2014) will be reviewed on a rolling schedule. All PIAs for capabilities going live after the new Act came into force on 25 May 2018, will be upgraded to the new Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) before the go live date of the project and assessed against the new data protection principles. Any new developments and projects will be assessed using the DPIA template from the outset.