Identity in a Digital World

Key concepts and definitions

Natural Person

Machine

(Application, system, process, bot, robot, etc.)
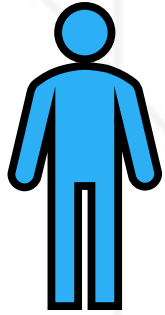
Personal Identity

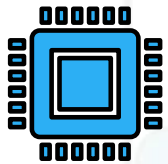How a person sees themselves

e.g., 25yrs old forever

Persona

How a person presents themselves to others in different situations, e.g., work colleague, friend, parent.

Digital Persona

How a person presents themselves online (or how an external entity perceives a person), e.g., game avatar.

Identity Proofing

The act of establishing to a specified level of assurance that a digital identity can be associated with a unique natural person, e.g., a bank requires more proof than a conference organiser.

Identity Mapping

The act of establishing to a specified level of assurance that multiple digital identities belong to the same person.

A digital identity and an account can be identical or different.

When a machine is given a digital identity, the identity must be assigned a human owner.
The owner is accountable for how the identity is used.

Digital Identity

A set of data about a subject (person or machine) that allows the subject to engage in digital transactions, e.g. NHS number & Date of birth

Account

A representation of a digital identity that enables authentication, authorisation and accounting within a specific digital system.

Authentication

The act of verifying to a specified level of assurance that a subject in an online transaction is the digital identity being asserted, i.e., I am who I say I am.

Authorisation

The act of verifying that an account is entitled to engage in a specific digital transaction, i.e. has permission from the owner of the resource being accessed.

Accounting

The act of recording the activity performed by an account to a specified level of granularity (aka 'logging').

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