



Information Commissioner's Office
Promoting public access to official information
and protecting your personal information

Press Release

Strictly embargoed until 00.01 on 28 January 2009

ICO launches Personal Information Promise

Organisations including Royal Mail, British Gas, BT, T-Mobile, Greater Manchester Police and Action for Children will sign the Personal Information Promise today. Businesses, charities and public sector bodies signing the Personal Information Promise will send a strong signal to staff, service users and customers that personal details will be handled and protected properly.

Richard Thomas, the Information Commissioner, will launch the Personal Information Promise in London and call on chief executives to hardwire 'people protection' into organisational culture and governance. By signing the Personal Information Promise, organisations will show individuals that they are committed to safeguarding their personal information. The ICO is concerned that people's personal information is not always treated as seriously as it should be by organisations.

New research, released today by the ICO, reveals that most organisations are strong advocates of the Data Protection Act with 95% saying it is needed. The figures, contained in the ICO's annual tracking survey, highlight that adhering to the Principles of the Act makes good business sense with 87% of organisations saying the Act improves customers' trust.

Richard Thomas, Information Commissioner, said: 'Data protection is good for business. We say so and businesses say so. Organisations are waking up to the fact that privacy is now so significant that lapses risk reputations and bottom lines. What company wants inaccurate records on its customers? What public body can afford to take risks with sensitive personal details? I urge leaders across government, the public, private and third sectors to take a positive attitude to data protection. Protecting people's personal details should not be left to chance. I urge all CEOs and

their executive teams to take personal responsibility for treating data protection as a corporate governance issue affecting the whole organisation. They have to make sure that safeguarding the personal information of the customers and staff is embedded in their organisational culture.'

Adam Crozier, Royal Mail Group's Chief Executive, said: "Royal Mail Group welcomes this initiative and is very pleased to support it as we are committed to high standards of personal data integrity and security across the whole of our operations."

Protecting people's personal information, minimising the amount of data held and making sure details are accurate and kept up to date are fundamental Data Protection Principles. The ICO wants all organisations, especially those with large databases, to make sure that they are addressing all the risks of data handling.

The Personal Information Promise is being launched today to coincide with European Data Protection Day. To sign up to the Personal Information Promise visit www.ico.gov.uk

ENDS

If you need more information, please contact the ICO press office on 020 7025 7580 or visit the website at: www.ico.gov.uk

Notes to Editors

A wide range of organisations are signing the Personal Information Promise today, including:

Action for Children – Clare Tickell, Chief Executive
Acxiom – Nick Martin - UK Managing Director
Anglesey County Council – Derrick Jones, Managing Director
AstraZeneca – David Brennan, Chief Executive
Belfast City Council – Lord Mayor
British Gas – Phil Bentley, Managing Director
British Telecom – Andrew Parker, Company Secretary
Callcredit UK – John McAndrew, Managing Director
Dudley Primary Care Trust – Mark Cooke, Chief Executive
Equifax – Sandra Lawrence, General Manager
Experian – Mr Mike Bradford, Director of Regulatory and Consumer Affairs and Charlotte Hogg, UK Managing Director.
Field Fisher Waterhouse – Stewart Room, Company Partner
Greater Manchester Police – Peter Fahy, Chief Constable
Informing Healthcare – Gwyn Thomas, Chief Executive

NHS Information Centre – Tim Straugham, CEO NHS Information Centre
Northern Ireland Association of Citizens Advice signature from Paul Horink Director of Information Services
Royal Mail – Adam Crozier, Chief Executive of Royal Mail Group
T-Mobile - Jim Hyde, Managing Director
Unison – Dave Prentice, General Secretary
Vodafone – Guy Lewis, Chief Executive Officer

The personal information promise is:

I (name and title), on behalf of (name of organisation) promise that we will:

1. value the personal information entrusted to us and make sure we respect that trust;
2. go further than just the letter of the law when it comes to handling personal information, and adopt good practice standards;
3. consider and address the privacy risks first when we are planning to use or hold personal information in new ways, such as when introducing new systems;
4. be open with individuals about how we use their information and who we give it to;
5. make it easy for individuals to access and correct their personal information;
6. keep personal information to the minimum necessary and delete it when we no longer need it;
7. have effective safeguards in place to make sure personal information is kept securely and does not fall into the wrong hands;
8. provide training to staff who handle personal information and treat it as a disciplinary matter if they misuse or don't look after personal information properly;
9. put appropriate financial and human resources into looking after personal information to make sure we can live up to our promises; and
10. regularly check that we are living up to our promises and report on how we are doing.

ICO:

The Information Commissioner's Office promotes public access to official information and protects personal information. The ICO is an independent body with specific responsibilities set out in the Data Protection Act 1998, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003.

For more information about the Information Commissioner's Office subscribe to our e-newsletter at www.ico.gov.uk

Anyone who processes personal information must comply with eight principles, which make sure that personal information is:

- Fairly and lawfully processed
- Processed for limited purposes
- Adequate, relevant and not excessive
- Accurate and up to date
- Not kept for longer than is necessary
- Processed in line with your rights
- Secure
- Not transferred to other countries without adequate protection