



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

## **Press Release**

### **For immediate release**

**Date:** 29 August 2007

### **ICO launches new guidance on personal data**

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has today published guidance on ["Determining what is personal data"](#). The technical guidance note explains and illustrates the ICO's view of what is personal data for the purposes of the Data Protection Act. It is designed to help data practitioners decide whether data falls within the definition where this is not obvious. Only data falling within the definition is subject to the rules of good information practice imposed by the Act.

Phil Jones, Assistant Commissioner at the ICO, said: "We have recognised for some time the need to provide more help to those who have to make difficult decisions on whether data is subject to the Data Protection Act. In many cases it will be obvious that data relates to, or is about, an individual. However, this is not always the case. The guidance relies heavily on examples to illustrate circumstances when data relates to an identifiable, living individual."

The definition of personal data is important to public authorities responding to access requests made under the Freedom of Information Act. That Act provides that where an access request is made to information that is the personal data of the requester that the request is handled as a subject access under the Data Protection Act. The Freedom of Information Act also provides that where the information requested is personal data about an individual other than the requester that the personal data should not be released if the release would involve a breach of data protection rules.

**ENDS**

If you need more information, please contact the Information Commissioner's press office on 020 7025 7580 or visit the website at: [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk)

### Notes to Editors

1. The Information Commissioner 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.
2. For more information about the Information Commissioner's Office subscribe to our e-newsletter at [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk)
3. 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
4. The website also carries copies of other good practice and technical guidance notes in this series. These include:
  - a. Subject access and third party information
  - b. CCTV
  - c. Subject access and employment references
  - d. Pension trustees
  - e. Professionals' opinions
  - f. Buying and selling databases
  - g. Outsourcing
  - h. Exam guidance
  - i. Privacy Enhancing Technologies
  - j. Council tax information
  - k. Information on the electoral register