



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

## **Press release**

Date: 24 May 2007

### **ICO explains information sharing approach to local authorities**

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has outlined the key factors which local authorities and other public bodies should consider before sharing personal information between departments or with other agencies and authorities.

According to the ICO's approach to information sharing local authorities must identify the intended benefits and potential risks, both to the individuals affected and to society, before sharing personal information. It is essential that local authorities address any risks and take reasonable steps to safeguard personal information.

Other factors which local authorities must consider before sharing personal information include considering whether consent is needed, transparency about what and when information is being shared and ensuring that the quality and accuracy of information is good enough to support the use.

Iain Bourne, Head of Information Sharing at the ICO, said: "If local authorities intend to share personal information, they must ensure that there is protection for the people the information is about. We expect local authorities to take a sensible approach to information sharing which enables them to fulfil their data protection responsibilities whilst providing high quality public services."

All personal information which is shared between authorities or agencies should be stored securely. Authorities have an obligation under the Data Protection Act to protect any personal information they hold. Authorities should be particular careful when the information is sensitive or confidential, such as that about an individual's health.

The ICO's approach to personal information sharing is available from the ICO's website

[http://www.ico.gov.uk/for\\_organisations/data\\_protection\\_guide.aspx](http://www.ico.gov.uk/for_organisations/data_protection_guide.aspx)

## **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).