



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

## **Press Release**

### **For immediate release**

Date: 12 February 2007

#### **Small business advice: handling requests from individuals for information about themselves**

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has published advice today aimed at small and medium sized firms (SMEs). The good practice note includes a simple checklist to help SMEs deal with requests from individuals for access to information held about them by an SME.

David Smith, Deputy Commissioner, said: 'The Data Protection Act gives us all important rights, enabling us to check the personal information that is held about us and to correct that information where necessary. This guidance sets out clear advice for small and medium sized businesses to help them deal with requests from individuals for access to information an SME might keep about them.'

The advice distinguishes between requests that SMEs can treat as part of normal business practice and those that should be dealt with formally under the Data Protection Act. It includes information on checking a person's identity and what SMEs should do if the information requested includes details about other people. There are also practical examples explaining information that should not be released.

A fee of up to £10 can be charged unless the information is a medical or educational record. Where a charge is levied the information must be supplied within 40 calendar days of receiving payment.

This good practice note is part of a series published by the Information Commissioner's Office to help explain data protection in simple terms. To download a copy, please go to [Good practice note](#)

## 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. This piece of guidance is part of a series aimed at making data protection simpler to understand.
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. Subject access and exams
  - i. Privacy enhancing technologies
  - j. Using violent warning markers
5. Anyone who processes personal information must comply with eight principles, which make sure that personal information is:
  - Fairly and lawfully processed
  - Processed for specified 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 countries outside the EEA without adequate protection