



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

## **Press Release**

**Strictly embargoed until 00.01 on Wednesday 19 March 2008**

### **UK consumers wake up to privacy**

Eight out of ten of us now take greater care in the way we look after our personal information, according to [new research](#) published today by the privacy watchdog, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

The nationwide survey suggests recent high profile data losses have had a significant impact on the way we now manage our personal information. Eighty eight per cent of us have started checking our bank statements on a more regular basis and 85% now refuse to give out personal details wherever possible.

The figures show that three quarters of us now worry more about the safety of our personal information than ever before. Fifty three per cent say we no longer have confidence in the way organisations such as banks, local authorities and government departments handle our personal information.

David Smith, Deputy Commissioner at the ICO, said: "I encourage everyone to check how organisations are storing their personal details. You can use your rights under the Data Protection Act to ensure your data is being properly looked after – use our checklist to ask the right questions. Taking care of our personal information has never been so important and, as the research shows, the majority of us are now much more aware of the value of our personal details. As more and more personal information is collected, the risk grows that some information will be inaccurate, out of date or end up in the wrong hands."

According to the research seven out of ten individuals feel powerless about how their personal information is looked after. The ICO is today urging individuals to use rights under the Data Protection Act in order to regain some control over their

personal information. The ICO has published a user friendly guide to data protection rights which includes a data protection checklist. The checklist outlines the questions which we should ask before giving out our details in order to 'check' an organisation's data protection practices.

David Smith said: "For any of us to have trust in an organisation we must be confident that our information is held securely and processed in line with data protection rules. If we all regularly start to ask the right questions then organisations will respond to public demand and take the protection of our personal information more seriously. If organisations fail to recognise the importance of data protection they not only risk losing business. They could also face action from the ICO."

## **Our data protection rights**

- An organisation should tell you what it is going to do with your information before you provide any details unless this is obvious
- Your information should only be used for the reason it was collected in the first place (unless you give your consent to your information being used in other ways)
- An organisation should not collect any information which is unnecessary. You only need to provide the basic information which is required to deliver the service required
- Your information should be kept accurate and up to date – if you ask any organisation to make changes to your details, it should do this
- An organisation should not keep your details if they are no longer needed
- An organisation must provide you with copies of all information held on you - if you ask. You can also ask an organisation to stop using your personal information if it is causing you damage or distress or if you wish to stop it being used for marketing purposes.
- An organisation must keep your personal information secure at all times
- An organisation should not transfer your personal details to another country unless adequate data protection arrangements are in place.

## **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. The research was carried out by ICM in February 2008. 1000 people took part.
4. There is detailed advice on data protection issues for consumers on the ICO website [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk)
5. 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