



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

Press Release
For immediate release

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Northern Irish barristers register with the ICO

A record 536 barristers in Northern Ireland are now registered as data controllers thanks to an initiative between the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) and the Northern Ireland Bar Council. This initiative is a welcome move and has set a national precedent for organisations to recognise and comply with the Data Protection Act.

Under the Data Protection Act organisations that process personal information about individuals must notify with the ICO, and if they fail to do so they can be prosecuted. To ensure every member of the Northern Irish Bar notifies, barristers can no longer obtain a practicing certificate unless they notify with the Information Commissioner. As part of the initiative with the Bar Council the ICO produced registration packs which were completed by the Bar on behalf of its members.

Information Commissioner Richard Thomas said: "We are delighted that the Bar Council has worked in partnership with the ICO on this initiative and we very much welcome its commitment to transparency. Barristers process a great deal of personal information, some of which is sensitive. Complying with the Data Protection Act ensures that individuals' personal information is secure, accurate, up-to-date and is processed fairly."

John O'Hara QC, Chairman of the Bar Council of Northern Ireland said: "This is a milestone in recognising the importance of data protection. It is obvious that barristers should comply with the Data Protection Act. The Northern Ireland Bar

Council wants to ensure that all personal data being processed by barristers is protected and secure.”

The cost of notification with the Information Commissioner’s Office is £35 per year and should be made directly to the Information Commissioner’s Office, based in Wilmslow.

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

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Notes to Editors

1. Data controllers (those in charge of data) are exempt from notification if they only process personal data for:
 - a. staff administration purposes (including payroll)
 - b. accounts and records purposes
 - c. advertising, marketing and public relations (of their own business)
2. Data controllers who do not process personal data on computer are also exempt.
3. For more information on notification, visit the website at www.ico.gov.uk or contact the Notification Team on 01625 545740.
4. 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 and other legislation.
5. For more information about the Information Commissioner’s Office subscribe to our e-newsletter at www.ico.gov.uk