



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

## **Press Release**

**Date: 20 February 2008**

### **Skipton Financial Services in breach of Data Protection Act**

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has found Skipton Financial Services (SFS) in breach of the Data Protection Act. This follows the theft of an unencrypted laptop which contained the personal information of 14,000 SFS customers.

The laptop, which contained names, dates of birth, national insurance numbers and investment amounts, was stolen from an SFS contractor. It is the ICO's view that SFS should have had appropriate encryption measures in place to keep the data secure.

Mick Gorrill, Assistant Commissioner at the ICO, said: "It is not always possible to prevent the theft of mobile devices such as laptops, but it is possible to minimise the damage caused by such losses. Companies must introduce adequate security procedures and safeguards, for example password protection and encryption, to protect personal information before it is allowed to leave the premises on a laptop. The ICO has issued clear guidance to help employers understand their obligations under the Data Protection Act.

"Organisations which process personal information must ensure that information is secure – this is an important principle of the Act. If organisations fail to introduce safeguards to protect information they risk losing the trust and confidence of both employees and customers."

SFS has now signed a legal document undertaking to ensure the security of personal data in the future. Sensitive information held on laptop computers

either by SFS or a contractor of SFS must be encrypted to provide effective protection against unauthorised access. SFS has also undertaken to ensure that risk assessments are carried out where third parties are processing data on behalf of SFS.

Last year Gordon Brown announced that the ICO would be given increased powers to conduct spot checks of government departments. The Information Commissioner has called for these powers to be extended to cover all public bodies and private sector organisations.

A copy of the undertaking can be downloaded at [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk)

## **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