



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

## **Press Release**

### **For immediate release**

Date: 8 September 2008

### **ICO publishes new guidance on requests for social care records**

The Information Commissioner's Office has published [new guidance](#) to help social care staff who regularly handle requests for social services records under the Data Protection Act.

Under the Data Protection Act, individuals have the right to request information relating to themselves. This is called a subject access request. The ICO recommends that because information contained in social care records often comes from a range of sources, social care professions should consider consulting with relevant professionals such as teachers and doctors when dealing with subject access requests. In the case of records containing health information, a medical practitioner may need to be consulted before dealing with the request.

Social care records may also contain information about third parties, usually family members. Requests for such records should be handled on a case-by-case basis but the guidance provides advice on the steps that should be taken. In some cases, records contain information that is so complex that it could require explanation, or so serious that its disclosure could be traumatic for the individual concerned. In such cases, it is advisable to offer individuals the opportunity to view the file during an interview with a social worker or counsellor.

The guidance '*Subject access requests and social services records*' is available on the ICO's website [here](#).

**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 Information Commissioner's Office has also issued general guidance on [subject access requests for data subjects](#) and on [dealing with information in records relating to professional opinions](#)
4. 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