

Monday 24 November 2008

Information Commissioner to be given tougher powers

Responding to the MOJ statement David Smith, Deputy Commissioner said:

'We welcome the MoJ's announcement that it will introduce legislation to provide significant new powers for the ICO. Protecting people's personal details has never been more important and these new powers send a strong message that data protection must be taken seriously.

'We particularly welcome the government's commitment to legislate to enable the ICO to inspect central government departments and other public sector bodies' compliance with the Data Protection Act without always requiring consent. Subject to approval from Parliament, this new remit will enable us to work closely with these organisations to improve their compliance with the Act. We would have preferred to have this power to undertake audits extended to private sector organisations as well.

'The commitment to increase the resources available to the ICO through the introduction of tiered notification fees should help enable us to carry out our extended duties properly.

'Provisions introduced earlier this year in the 2008 Criminal Justice and Immigration Act will enable the ICO to impose substantial fines on organisations where there is evidence of reckless or deliberate data protection breaches. We are working with the Ministry of Justice to ensure that we can make use of this power as soon as possible. '

For all media enquires, please contact the ICO press office on 0207 025 7580.