



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

Press Release

For immediate release

23 March 2009

ICO takes action against Camden PCT for data blunder

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has taken [enforcement](#) action against Camden Primary Care Trust (PCT) following a breach of the Data Protection Act.

Computers containing 2,500 individuals' names, addresses and medical diagnoses were left beside a skip inside the grounds of St. Pancras Hospital in August 2008. The computers, which were no longer in use and were not encrypted, were removed from the scene without authorisation and were never recovered.

The ICO has served Camden PCT with an Enforcement Notice for failing to take appropriate measures to safeguard the security of people's personal details.

Mick Gorrill, Assistant Information Commissioner at the ICO, said: "The ICO takes all data breaches seriously. Individuals must feel confident that their personal health records will be handled properly by NHS bodies. Over 2,500 individuals may have suffered anxiety as a result of this breach with the worry that their medical records could fall into the wrong hands. This incident highlights organisational error and will no doubt damage public trust in the NHS locally.

"I am increasingly concerned about the way some NHS organisations dispose of sensitive patient information. Organisations need to ensure they implement appropriate safeguards to ensure personal details about patients are disposed of in compliance with the Data Protection Act."

Camden PCT is now required to ensure all personal information is removed from computer equipment as soon as it is decommissioned. The PCT has been ordered to update the ICO on progress made by 31 March 2009.

Failure to meet the terms of the Enforcement Notice would be a criminal offence and may lead to prosecution. A copy of the Notice can be downloaded from http://www.ico.gov.uk/what_we_cover/data_protection/enforcement.aspx

ENDS

If you need more information, please contact the ICO press office on 020 7025 7580 or visit the website at: www.ico.gov.uk

Notes to Editors

1. The ICO has issued guidance on handling data breaches.
http://www.ico.gov.uk/Home/what_we_cover/data_protection/guidance/good_practice_notes.aspx
2. The Information Commissioner's Office has ordered a number of organisations to sign Undertakings following breaches of the Data Protection Act. Organisations include the Department of Health, NHS Trusts, Home Office, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Orange Personal Communications Services Ltd.
3. The ICO 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.
4. For more information about the Information Commissioner's Office subscribe to our e-newsletter at 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