



Information Commissioner's Office
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Press Release

For immediate release

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Department of Health must improve its management of records

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has issued a formal practice recommendation to the Department of Health regarding its record management practice. This follows a request by the ICO, and with the agreement of the Department, for the National Archives (TNA) to conduct an assessment of records management practice at the authority.

The Information Commissioner's Office is seeking significant improvements in the way the Department manages and retains its records in the future.

The assessment found that there are good central policies and guidance in place. However, much of the responsibility for day-to-day management of records has been devolved to local staff, leading to the development of local practices, some of which lack consistency across the Department. The recommendation concludes that senior managers must do more to ensure that good behaviours and practices are reinforced, especially in the face of organisational changes.

The Assistant Information Commissioner, Gerrard Tracey, said: "Existing guidance states that good records management should be seen as a benefit, not a burden. All organisations, public and private, are advised to have good records management as part of achieving business efficiency, by making sure that information is easily retrieved and properly documented."

This is the second practice recommendation the ICO has issued to the Department of Health for failing to meet its requirements under the Freedom of Information Act. In April 2008 the Department was served a practice recommendation in relation to its handling of FOI requests.

The Information Commissioner recognises that the Department is already working to improve its records management practices and welcomes this approach. The ICO will continue to monitor the Department's request handling and records management functions and with the support of TNA, will be assessing its progress against the recommendations.

Please see [here](#) for a copy of the practice recommendation.

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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. Failure to comply with a Practice Recommendation may lead to failure to comply with the Act which in turn may result in enforcement action.
2. A full copy of the guidance on records management can be found at: http://www.ico.gov.uk/upload/documents/library/freedom_of_information/detailed_specialist_guides/awareness_guidance_8_-_records_management_faqs_v2.pdf
3. The Information Commissioner's Office promotes public access to official information and protects personal information. The ICO is the UK's independent influential and practical authority on information rights and responsibilities, making a difference to people.
4. The ICO has 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.
5. For more information about the Information Commissioner's Office subscribe to our e-newsletter at www.ico.gov.uk