



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

Press Release

22 June 2009

Manchester City Council breaches the Data Protection Act

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has found Manchester City Council in breach of the Data Protection Act after the theft of two laptop computers from the Town Hall, one of which contained personal details relating to 1,754 employees at local schools. Neither of the laptops was encrypted nor were they secured to the desks.

A formal [Undertaking](#) has been signed by Sir Howard Bernstein, Chief Executive of Manchester City Council. The council must ensure all laptops and other removable devices are encrypted and secured to desks or locked away. The council will also ensure that only essential personal information is downloaded to mobile devices.

Sally-anne Poole, Head of Enforcement & Investigations at the ICO, said: "One of the stolen laptops contained personal details on members of staff in local schools from the Manchester area. The council should handle all personal information, including employment details, in compliance with the Data Protection Act. Organisations must implement appropriate safeguards to ensure personal details are handled securely and do not fall into the wrong hands.

"We urge all councils and their executive teams to take responsibility for treating data protection as a corporate governance issue affecting the entire organisation. They have to make sure that safeguarding the personal information of their staff is embedded in their organisational culture.

"The Data Protection Act clearly states that organisations must take appropriate measures to ensure that personal information is kept secure. Manchester City Council recognises the seriousness of this data loss and has agreed to take

immediate action. It has also agreed to implement an improved training programme, including regular refresher training for all staff.”

Failure to meet the terms of the Undertaking is likely to lead to enforcement action by the ICO. A copy of the Undertaking 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 private sector, NHS, central government and local government have all reported significant numbers of breaches to the ICO. The latest figures include 140 within the NHS and other health bodies, 53 by central government, 60 by local authorities, 72 by the rest of the public sector and 161 by the private sector.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Organisations can now sign the Personal Information Promise to demonstrate their commitment to protecting people’s personal information by visiting the website at www.ico.gov.uk
5. For more information about the Information Commissioner’s Office subscribe to our e-newsletter at www.ico.gov.uk
6. 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