



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

Press Release

Immediate release

Friday 05 June 2009

ICO launches an updated guide for privacy impact assessments

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is urging organisations to always consider the impact on individuals' privacy before developing new IT systems or changing the way they handle personal information. The call comes as the ICO today launches the latest version of [the Privacy Impact Assessment \(PIA\) handbook](#). The user friendly handbook is designed to help organisations address the risks to personal privacy before implementing new initiatives and technologies.

Jonathan Bamford, Assistant Information Commissioner at the ICO, said: "For the public to have trust in an organisation, individuals must be confident that their information is held securely and processed in line with the Data Protection Principles. Each time someone gives away their personal information this not only puts the data at risk, they can leave a footprint creating a detailed picture of aspects of their daily lives. Therefore, it is essential that before introducing new systems and technologies, which could accelerate the growth of a surveillance society, full consideration is given to the impact on individuals and that safeguards are in place to minimise intrusion.

He continued: "Privacy impact assessments are a common sense approach to help organisations develop privacy friendly ways of working. The new PIA handbook is more accessible and will aim to assist organisations in protecting people's personal information and ensuring that privacy safeguards are built into

systems at the outset rather than bolted on as an inadequate and expensive afterthought.”

Following the HMRC data breach in November 2007 the Cabinet Office introduced a mandatory procedure for all central government departments and their agencies to adopt Privacy Impact Assessments when developing new systems. The ICO encourages all organisations to incorporate data protection safeguards into any new project involving personal information.

The benefits of a Privacy Impact Assessment include:

- Identifying and managing risks
- Avoiding unnecessary costs
- Avoiding the introduction of inadequate solutions too late in a scheme’s development
- Avoiding loss of trust and reputational damage
- The opportunity to inform and seek feedback from stakeholders
- Meeting and exceeding legal requirements

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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. 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
2. 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
3. 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

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