



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

Press Release

For immediate release

04 June 2009

Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust breaches the Data Protection Act

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has found Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust in breach of the Data Protection Act after the Trust reported a desktop computer containing sensitive personal information relating to around 3,500 patients was stolen. Although the computer was password protected, it was not encrypted or secured to a desk.

A formal [undertaking](#) has been signed by Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust. The Trust will ensure appropriate security measures are in place to restrict access to areas where personal information is stored and desktop computers will be secured to desks to prevent easy removal. The Trust will also ensure that any personal data required to be held on a portable device is suitably encrypted and that personal details are not retained on any computer for longer than is required.

Mick Gorrill, Assistant Information Commissioner at the ICO, said: "The stolen computer contained sensitive personal details on patients. The Trust should handle all personal information, particularly sensitive details, in compliance with the Data Protection Act. I am increasingly concerned about the way some NHS organisations are failing to securely hold people's health and personal information. Organisations must implement appropriate safeguards to ensure personal details about patients do not fall into the wrong hands.

"The Data Protection Act clearly states that organisations must take appropriate measures to ensure that personal information is kept secure. The Salford Royal NHS

Foundation Trust recognises the seriousness of this data loss and has agreed to take immediate remedial action. It has also agreed to conduct future audits to ensure compliance with the Act.”

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