



Information Commissioner's Office

Press Release

For immediate release

11 February 2010

Alzheimer's Society improves data security after staff details are stolen

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is reminding charities that personal information must be handled securely after finding the Alzheimer's Society in breach of the Data Protection Act. The Alzheimer's Society reported three separate breaches involving personal information to the ICO during 2009.

Several unencrypted laptops were stolen during a burglary at their office in Cardiff last August. The laptops were neither physically secured by cable locks nor locked away securely. One of the laptops contained personal details including names, addresses, national insurance numbers and salary details for about 1,000 staff across England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The Alzheimer's Society has now signed a [formal Undertaking](#) promising to improve security. The Undertaking also requires staff to be made aware of the Society's policies for the storage, use and disposal of personal information. Staff must receive appropriate training on how to follow these policies.

Sally-anne Poole, Head of Investigations at the ICO, said: "A thousand staff members' details were stored on unencrypted laptops. This is unacceptable; portable devices must be encrypted if they are used to store personal information. It is vital that all organisations ensure personal information is handled securely and that appropriate staff have adequate training in this area. We are aware that the laptops were due to be encrypted and I am pleased that the Alzheimer's Society has taken action to guard against security breaches of this nature in future."

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 data controller shall, as from the date of this undertaking and for so long as similar standards are required by the Act or other successor legislation ensure that personal data are processed in accordance with the Seventh Data Protection Principle in Part I of Schedule 1 to the Act, and in particular that:
 - (1) Portable and mobile devices including laptops and other portable media used to store and transmit personal data, the loss of which could cause damage or distress to individuals, are encrypted using encryption software which meets the current standard or equivalent;
 - (2) Physical security measures are adequate to prevent unauthorised access to personal data;
 - (3) Staff are aware of the data controller's policy for the storage and use of personal data and are appropriately trained how to follow that policy;
 - (4) The data controller shall implement such other security measures as it deems appropriate to ensure that personal data is protected against unauthorised and unlawful process, accidental loss, destruction, and/or damage.
2. The Information Commissioner's Office upholds information rights in the public interest, promoting openness by public bodies and data privacy for individuals. 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. The ICO's Guide to Data Protection can be downloaded here:
http://www.ico.gov.uk/upload/documents/library/data_protection/practical_application/the_guide_to_data_protection.pdf
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. Alternatively, you can find us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/ICOnews
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