

Press Release

Strictly embargoed until 14 July 2010

Information rights go centre stage

The information watchdog is handling record levels of business and productivity is dramatically up, the Information Commissioner's Annual Report for 2009/10 shows.

Speaking at the [annual report](#) launch today, the Information Commissioner, Christopher Graham will say that the watchdog is in pole position to deliver on the agenda of transparency, accountability, privacy and freedom.

"We've never been busier," says the Commissioner, reporting a 20% rise in freedom of information cases and a 30% rise in data protection cases. "But despite the surge in business, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is keeping on top of the demand for our services." The office closed 39% more cases than in 2008/09.

Christopher Graham says: "Technology, concerns about data security and the welcome focus on transparency of official information mean information rights are centre stage. We have made some significant internal changes to ensure we are best placed to deal with the increasing demands and expectations placed upon us by the public and the organisations we work with. Respect for information rights is not optional. Organisations that ignore their responsibilities will not only lose the confidence and trust of citizens and consumers but could face painful enforcement action from the ICO as well."

In 15 months the ICO has reduced a historic backlog of freedom of information complaints. The number of cases closed in 2009/10 increased by 39% on the previous year to 4,196. At the same time the ICO has dealt with more enquiries than ever - in 2009/10 the ICO received 3,734 freedom of information complaints, up 20% compared to 2008/09.

With a new ICO mission statement and increased regulatory powers, Mr Graham uses his annual report to call for the Information Commissioner to report directly to Parliament, as in the case of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, to increase transparency around the reporting and financing arrangements of the ICO.

Christopher Graham, Information Commissioner, says: "I believe that the ICO has not just to be independent of government, but be seen to be independent. To carry out my duties effectively and with the full confidence of all parties, now is the time to formalise the governance arrangements for the Information Commissioner, suitable for an independent public official whose accountability is fully to Parliament, rather than primarily via Departments of State."

The annual report highlights that the ICO received over 212,000 calls to its helpline in 2009/10 – a 6% increase compared to 2008/09. It received 33,234 enquiries and complaints concerning personal information. Failing to adequately deal with requests for personal information topped the list of complaints to the ICO under the Data Protection Act. Lenders came top of the list of sectors generating the most complaints under the Act.

A full copy of the annual report can be downloaded here:

http://www.ico.gov.uk/about_us/what_we_do/corporate_information/annual_reports.aspx

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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 upholds information rights in the public interest, promoting openness by public bodies and data privacy for individuals.
2. The ICO is an independent body with 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 Freedom of Information Act applies to public authorities and gives people the right to request official information. The authority must respond to the request within 20 working days and must have an approved publication scheme.
4. 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
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