

News release

28 January 2011

80% of people concerned about their personal details online

A survey has revealed that 80% of people are concerned about protecting their personal information online, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) said today.

In a move to mark European Data Protection Day, Information Commissioner, Christopher Graham, supported by Lord McNally, Minister of State at the Ministry of Justice, is urging people to take more care on social networking sites, to think before giving out their personal details online, and to understand what to do when things go wrong.

Research commissioned by the ICO has also found that 96% of individuals surveyed are concerned that organisations do not keep their details secure, and a further 60% believe that they have lost control of the way their personal information is collected and processed.

To help online users understand how to surf safely, the ICO has today relaunched its *Personal Information Toolkit*. The toolkit includes tips on how to protect personal details online as well as setting out people's rights to access and correct the information that is held about them. The previous version of the toolkit has been requested by over 100,000 members of the public to date.

The importance of protecting yourself online isn't just a lesson that adults must learn. Educational events for school children are taking place across

the country involving 5,000 secondary school children. *I in Online* is a UK-wide scheme, spearheaded by law firm Speechly Bircham, that provides schools and youth clubs across the UK with free interactive training sessions developed for staff, parents and children to provide advice on how best to manage online privacy.

Information Commissioner, Christopher Graham, said:

“It’s never been more important to protect your personal information. Whether you’re surfing the net, shopping online or signing up to social networking sites, it’s crucial that people are thinking about how their information might be used.

“From employers looking up potential employees on Facebook to cyber criminals hacking into unsecured wifi networks, not protecting your personal information can cause serious harm and distress. European Data Protection Day is about motivating people to regain control of their right to privacy. I hope people of all ages across the UK will do just that.”

Minister of State for the Ministry of Justice, Lord McNally, said:

“The Data Protection Act has governed how our personal information is handled and used for more than a decade, and the issue of keeping our personal data safe is still as relevant as ever. Technology has come a long way since the 1990s, but with fresh opportunities come fresh risks for our personal information. This is why the Government is working with businesses, charities, consumer groups and the public sector, to look at the law and ensure it continues to protect our personal information well into the 21st century.

“But in addition to our work and that of the ICO, there is a huge amount that people can do to arm themselves against misuse of data, such as

identity theft. I would especially encourage people to make use of the ICO's Personal Information Toolkit, because knowing your rights and knowing the risks really is the best way to protect yourself."

The key privacy issues that people need to think about in order to protect their personal information include:

- Make sure the information held about you is accurate - you could be unfairly refused a job, benefits or credit, or a place at college. You have a right to see and correct the information that all organisations hold about you.
- Protect yourself on social networking sites – anything you put on the sites may be publicly available so make sure you use strict privacy settings if you don't want everyone to see your information. Think about what is appropriate too – a friend may not want to be 'tagged' in your photo album so use common sense to avoid upsetting anyone.
- You can stop unwanted marketing – if you are receiving electronic direct-marketing messages, phone calls, faxes, emails, or texts, there are ways that you can make sure this doesn't keep happening.
- Read the small print – before you sign up to a new website or buy a product make sure you check how the company will use your information, including whether it will pass the information on to third parties.
- Make sure your wifi connection is password protected – not doing so puts your personal information at more risk from hackers who could take your personal data to commit fraud or use your connection to download illegal or inappropriate material.

- Make sure your information moves with you – failing to redirect your mail could leave you open to identity theft.

ENDS

If you need more information, please contact the ICO press office on 0303 123 9070 or visit the website at: www.ico.gov.uk.

Notes to Editors

1. The personal information toolkit is available on the ICO website here: http://www.ico.gov.uk/~media/documents/library/Data_Protection/Practical_application/personal_information_toolkit.pdf
The toolkit is also available in Welsh here: http://www.ico.gov.uk/~media/documents/library/Data_Protection/Practical_application/personal_information_toolkit_welsh.pdf
2. The ICO's full research report is available on the ICO website here: http://www.ico.gov.uk/about_us/research/corporate.aspx
3. The European Data Protection Supervisor has published a [video](#) on their website welcoming European Data Protection Day. The video discusses the European Commissioner's Review of the Data Protection Legal Framework which the ICO has recently contributed to.
4. The Information Commissioner's Office upholds information rights in the public interest, promoting openness by public bodies and data privacy for individuals.
5. 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.
6. 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](#) and [Linkedin](#).
7. Anyone who processes personal information must comply with eight principles of the Data Protection Act, 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
8. The Data Protection Act transposes the EU Data Protection Directive (95/46/EC) into UK law. Viviane Reding, Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, is expected to bring forward a new

legislative proposal for data protection in mid 2011.

9. The Government is publishing a response to its Call for Evidence on the Data Protection Legislative Framework. The Call for Evidence was launched on 6 July and closed on 6 October 2010. Around 160 written responses were received from a range of members of the public and organisations, including consumer groups, small businesses, large international organisations and local and central government departments.