

Press Release

For immediate release

26 November 2009

Action taken after details of 110,000 individuals are stolen

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has found Verity Trustees Ltd to be in breach of the Data Protection Act after the Trustees reported the theft of a laptop computer containing the names, addresses, dates of birth, salaries and national insurance numbers of around 110,000 individuals.

The laptop, which also contained the bank details of around 18,000 individuals, was stolen from a locked server room at Northgate Arinso – suppliers of the Trustees' computerised pensions administration system. The data was downloaded for training purposes in breach of Northgate Arinso's policy of only using an anonymised data sample for 50 to 100 pension scheme members.

A formal [Undertaking](#) has been signed by Verity Trustees Ltd to ensure that personal data is processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act. Verity Trustees Ltd will ensure portable and mobile devices used to store and transmit personal data are suitably encrypted. Adequate written contracts that encompass data security obligations will also be put in place with data processors as soon as is practically possible.

Mick Gorrill, Assistant Information Commissioner at the ICO, said: "This is a stark reminder of how easy it can be to put so many people's details at risk. Failure to follow security policies and downloading such a vast amount of information has resulted in thousands of individuals' personal details being compromised. It is encouraging to see that the Trustees have taken remedial steps, including the engagement of a fraud protection service provider to protect the affected individuals.

I am also satisfied that the Trustees will now take appropriate steps to ensure individuals' details are protected.”

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 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 is processed in accordance with the Seventh Data Protection Principle in Part I of Schedule 1 to the Act, and in particular that:
 - 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;
 - Adequate written contracts are in place with third parties acting as data processors that encompass data security obligations as soon as practicable and in any event by no later than six months from the date of the undertaking being given;
 - Adequate measure are in place to ensure third parties meet their contractual data security obligations as soon as practicable and in any event by no later than six months from the date of the undertaking being given ;
 - The data controller shall implement such other security measures 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.
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