

Data Protection Policy

The Data Protection Act 1998 came into force on 1 March 2000 and superseded the Data Protection Act 1984. The purpose of the Act is to protect the rights and privacy of individuals, and to ensure that data about them are not processed without their knowledge and are processed with their consent wherever possible. The Act covers personal data relating to living individuals, and defines a category of sensitive personal data which are subject to more stringent conditions on their processing than other personal data. We are committed to a policy of protecting the rights and freedoms of individuals with respect to the processing of their personal data.

The Data Protection Act applies to electronic and paper records held in structured filing systems containing personal data, meaning data which relates to living individuals who can be identified from the data. This includes any expression of opinion about an individual and intentions towards an individual. We collect a large amount of personal data every year including: staff records, names and addresses of those requesting company information, names and addresses of customers, references and customer credit/debit card information.

Responsibilities

Data Protection means that we must:

- Manage and process personal data properly
- Protect the individual's rights to privacy
- Provide an individual with access to all personal information held on them

We have a legal responsibility to comply with the Act. The Director has the overall responsibility for this policy.

We are required to notify the Information Commissioner of the processing of personal data, this is included in a public register. The public register of data controllers is available on the Information Commissioner's website.

The Office Manager is responsible for drawing up guidance on good data protection practice and promoting compliance with this guidance through advising staff on the creation, maintenance, storage and retention of their records which contain personal information.

Every member of staff that holds information about identifiable living individuals has to comply with data protection in managing that information. Individuals can be liable for breaches of the Act.

Guidance

Guidance on the procedures necessary to comply with this policy is available from the Office Manager. This guidance covers:

- Introduction to Data Protection including Data Protection principles, types of data involved and key concepts
- Best practice guidelines including:
 - o Use of personal data by employees
 - o Transfer of personal data to third parties
 - o Security of personal data
 - o Use of personal data in research
 - o Confidential references
 - o Transfer of personal data to non-EEA countries
- Procedures for dealing with subject access requests