



# Privacy & Data Protection

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## Employment Code released

### Headlines:

- National Consumer Council calls for tougher DP laws, p.13
- MasterCard—largest data breach ever, p.13
- Indian processing—security concerns, p.14

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Employers now have their own comprehensive code of good practice for data protection compliance in the workplace. The Code describes how information on members of staff should be gathered, used and stored.

At a launch event in Whitehall in mid June, the Information Commissioner officially unveiled the Employment Practices Code. The final version of the Code, produced by the Information Commissioner's Office under Section 51 of the Data Protection Act 1998, represents several years of work and extensive consultation.

Draft versions of the Code, which have been the subject of considerable debate and controversy over several years, have been re-

leased at various stages in the prolonged production process.

Richard Thomas, the Information Commissioner, said that he was delighted that the final version of the Code had met with such universal approval from a number of different and influential bodies with disparate interests. He went on the say that he would be looking to employers to take the Code seriously. "Although the advice in the Code is not law, we will cite the Code in connection with any relevant enforcement action."

The Code had benefited from significant input from organisations such as the Trades Union Congress ('TUC'), the Confederation of British Industry ('CBI')

and the Human Genetics Commission. Part III of the Code, on monitoring of employees, has been the most challenging aspect. At the launch event, Hanna Reed of the TUC said that, "Surveillance techniques are becoming ever more sophisticated and intrusive and so the Code is very welcome in setting out employers' responsibilities."

Susannah Haan of the CBI said that, "the Code leads to a better focus on management for employers and we strongly welcome the new version of the Code."

The Code, in four parts (covering Recruitment & Selection, Employment Records, Monitoring at Work and Health Records) is accompanied by two supplemental documents: the  
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## Commissioner slams identity card register proposals

The Information Commissioner, Richard Thomas has spoken out strongly against the proposals for the national register that will sit behind the proposed identity cards.

In its latest attempt to push identity cards on a public that is largely ignorant to their implications for personal privacy, the government is insisting that cards will help tackle identity theft. The Liberal Democrats have pointed out that the government has used a variety of reasons for identity cards—first that they would help

fight illegal immigration, then that they would prevent benefit fraud, more recently that they would help the fight against terrorism, and most recently that identity theft would be restricted. So far the government has hesitated to site the London attacks of early July in its case for the introduction of ID cards.

The Commissioner's concerns regarding the ID card register centre around the breadth of the potential uses for the information, the number of organisations

that will have access to the information and the extent of the information.

It seems that the government may have been shocked at the size of the objection to the Identity Cards Bill. In the first signs of a possible climb-down, Tony Blair has made an initial indications that ID cards may not ever be issued—he said that no one wants to spend millions and millions of pounds on the scheme. However, it is

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