

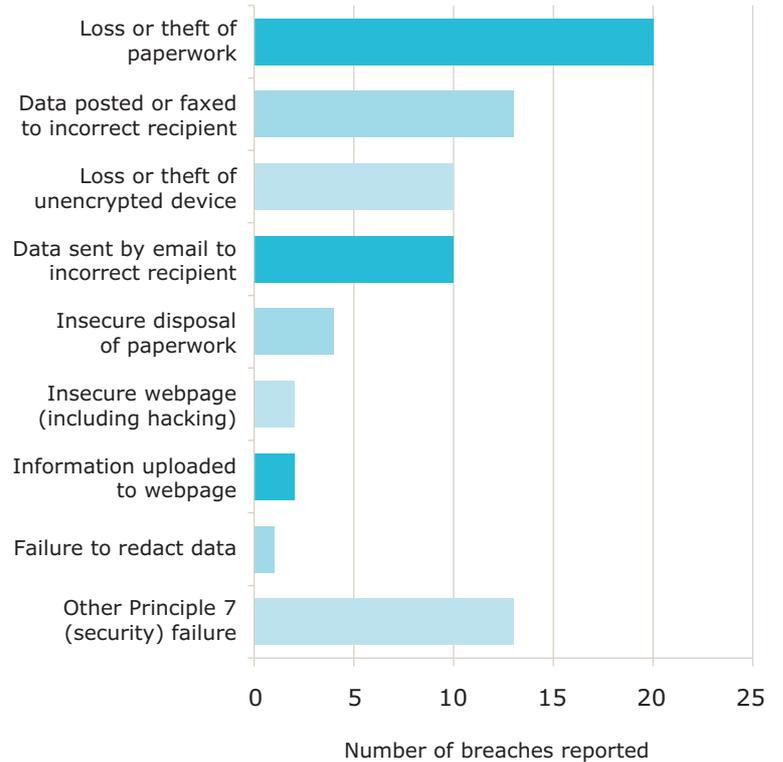
Summary of data security incidents relating to solicitors and barristers reported to the ICO in 2015/16



In 2015/16, 4% of all data security incidents reported to the ICO related to solicitors and barristers. That's 77 out of 2029.

This is a 5% decrease on the previous year.

Legal sector data security incidents by type in 2015/16



The two main data protection issues affecting the legal profession are:



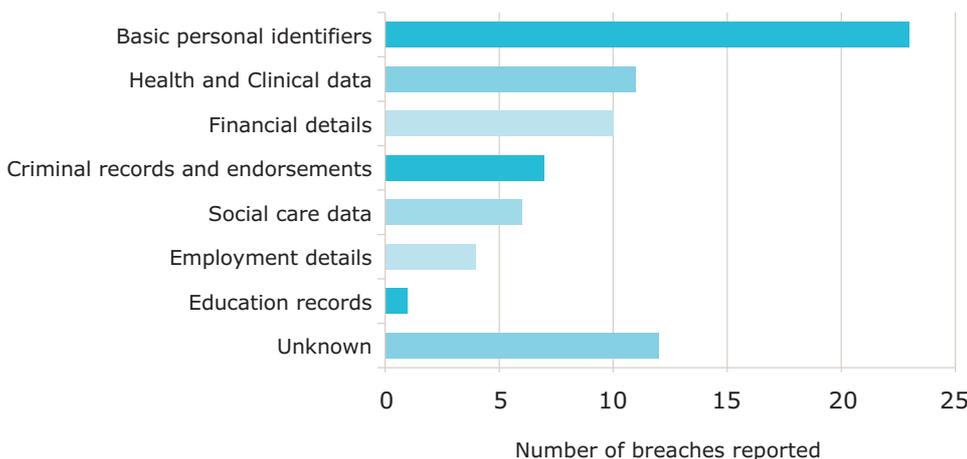
Loss and theft of paperwork (26% of data security incidents in 2015/16)

Data being posted or faxed to the incorrect recipient (17% of data security incidents in 2015/16)



These issues are reflective of the fact that information handled by legal professionals is often held in paper files rather than secured by encryption. Legal professionals will often carry around large quantities of information in folders or files when taking them to or from court, and may store them at home. This can increase the risk of a data breach.

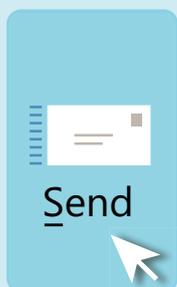
Incidents by data type



The information held by legal professionals is often very sensitive; therefore the damage caused by data breaches is often substantial and could meet the statutory threshold for issuing a financial penalty.

Four incidents in 2015/16 are known to have affected more than 100 data subjects.

ICO enforcement action involving solicitors



In October 2012, Stoke City Council received a Civil Monetary Penalty of

£120,000

after a solicitor working on behalf of the council sent 11 emails to the wrong email address by mistake. The emails varied in sensitivity but some contained confidential and highly sensitive personal data.

In June 2014, Oxfordshire County Council received an undertaking after a solicitor removed a number of documents from their offices but dropped them in a street near their home. The documents related to child protection cases and contained sensitive personal data on **22** data subjects.



ICO blog

In 2014, [the ICO issued a blog](#) emphasising the importance of solicitors and barristers keeping personal information secure, following a number of data breaches involving the legal profession. The blog includes a number of tips to help keep personal data secure, including:

- Keep paper records secure. Do not leave files in your car overnight and do lock information away when it is not in use.
- Consider data minimisation techniques in order to ensure that you are only carrying information that is essential to the task in hand.
- Where possible, store personal information on an encrypted memory stick or portable device. If the information is properly encrypted it will be virtually impossible to access it, even if the device is lost or stolen.
- When sending personal information by email consider whether the information needs to be encrypted or password protected. Avoid the pitfalls of auto-complete by double checking to make sure the email address you are sending the information to is correct.
- Only keep information for as long as is necessary. You must delete or dispose of information securely if you no longer need it.
- If you are disposing of an old computer, or other device, make sure all of the information held on the device is permanently deleted before disposal.

If you would like to contact us, please call 0303 123 1113. Visit our website at ico.org.uk.