



ICO25 – empowering you through information



ico.
Information Commissioner's Office



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Commissioner's foreword



Empowering you through information.

Those four words sum up ICO25.

I want – we all want – a regulator who empowers.

Empowering people to confidently share their information to use the products and services that drive our economy and our society.

Empowering organisations to use information responsibly and confidently to invest and innovate.

And empowering people to hold government to account, driving transparency that helps us all better trust in the decisions taken by public bodies.

These are the principles that will underpin our work for the next three years.

But these are not ambitions that we can simply talk into being. We need a clear plan, one that not only sets out the work we will do to reach these goals, but also the work we will not do.

And so we have ICO25. A vision of the regulator we want to be, and the world we want to shape. And a practical plan of how we get there.

ICO25 sets out how we can save UK businesses more than £100m through greater certainty and more targeted support, and with specific recognition of the challenges the public sector faces.

It recognises that information rights are about people – relationships, trust, equality, democracy and dignity.

And it recognises the importance of freedom of information, and the need for fundamental change to ensure we have transparency fit for the modern world.

Our work is informed by you: business, government, civil society and the people our work affects. I heard your views throughout my listening tour. And I heard too the views of ICO staff, and the voices of the people we want to empower. We won't stop listening.

We've got a lot to do in the next three years. But the ambitions set out in this plan will ensure we're busy with the right work: making the difference to people's lives.

- John Edwards, Information Commissioner.

What does the ICO25 plan do

Our ICO25 plan sets out:

- why our work is important;
- what we want to be known for and by whom; and
- how we intend to achieve this by 2025.

In doing so, it describes our purpose, objectives and values and the shift in approach we aim to achieve through the life of this plan.

The environment in which we work is complex, fast moving and ever changing. ICO25 helps us to understand and describe our priorities, enabling us to make informed choices about the action we take and the interventions we make. It has been informed by extensive stakeholder consultation and the responsibilities we have been given by Parliament.


What does it mean to me?

For the organisations we regulate, we know how important clarity and certainty are to help you to plan and innovate. ICO25 gives clarity about the risks and opportunities we believe need our most urgent attention and where we intend to focus our efforts, both for the long-term and in terms of our priorities for the next 12 months.

For members of the public, ICO25 demonstrates how we are working in your interests, and how we will protect and empower you to engage with society and the economy. We know feeling safe and confident in how your information is being used is critical to this and ICO25 explains how we will do this for everyone.

For our teams, ICO25 describes why we are here, what we want to achieve and how we want to achieve it. This makes sure the work we do together is focused on the right things, we can all share a clear purpose for our work and we're working as one ICO. It informs the decisions we make, the work we prioritise and the way we work.

Further Reading

 [Call for views: ICO25 plan](#)
About the ICO

Our purpose

Our increasingly digital society and economy are built on trillions of uses and exchanges of personal and public information every day.

Information can drive everything in our lives: from our healthcare to our job opportunities, or the decisions made for and about us. Upholding our information rights and seizing the opportunities of innovative information use has therefore never been more important.

Information rights isn't about processing and protecting data. It's about people - relationships, trust, equality, democracy and dignity. Organisations play a crucial role in shaping our attitudes to information use. We need to trust that our information rights will be respected if we are to confidently use the products and services provided by organisations which power our economy and society.

The ICO exists to empower you through information:

- We empower you as a member of the public to confidently contribute to a thriving society and sustainable economy.
- We empower your organisation to confidently plan, invest, innovate and grow.
- We empower you by promoting openness and transparency by public bodies.
- We empower you to hold us to account for the difference we make when enforcing the laws we oversee.

As a whole economy regulator, including of Government and the public sector, we enable all businesses and organisations to plan and invest in the use of information responsibly. We do this by providing certainty on what the law requires, what represents good practice and our approach as the regulator.

We proactively identify trends around new uses of personal information. We scan the horizon and work with others, so we can anticipate issues and intervene early to prevent harms and support data-driven innovation. In engaging with issues and supporting organisations in this way, we enable innovation and protect people.

We take pride in our ability to simplify and lower the cost of compliance with the law, showing that it can be a 'how to', not a 'don't do'. We meet the needs of the UK's diverse society and business community by turning complex laws into services and support that are practical, understandable and relevant to everyday lives.

We enforce the laws we are responsible for through a variety of enabling and dissuasive regulatory interventions. These range from providing guidance and tools to signal clear expectations and to empower responsible information use, through to issuing enforcement notices and monetary penalties, where it is necessary to do so. We intervene proportionately, clearly and only where needed. Our interventions aim to create a fairer playing field for compliant organisations and to protect people.

Strategic context

Our approach to achieving our purpose is informed by the strategic context in which we operate.

Our privacy and information rights are built into the historic DNA of UK democracy and society. The laws we oversee are concerned with personal information as well as public information. This means we regulate government and the public sector as well as the rest of the economy.

Our purpose as a regulator is informed by a range of statutory duties across 11 separate legal frameworks.

These legislative frameworks are set by Parliament. While we are independent in how we set and deliver our objectives, we are accountable to Parliament and the public for the outcomes we achieve through a variety of regulatory interventions.

For example:

- the provision of advice;
- offering guidance and tools;
- publishing formal Opinions;
- undertaking audits and inspections;
- issuing recommendations from complaints and breach reports;
- mandating changes to practice or processes; and
- where necessary, issuing monetary penalties.

Our aim is to provide certainty. We deliver a range of services to help organisations understand and comply with their obligations, always aware of the difference between minimum legal requirements and good practice advice. We also work to ensure people know their rights, and to enable wide-ranging societal and economic benefits.

We recognise that our approach to providing this certainty cannot be static. Societal change, the pace of technological change and innovation and the increasing sophistication of data use in our digital age, means the landscape we regulate is constantly transforming. The UK Government is also seeking to make changes to the legislative framework in which we operate, to ensure the law keeps pace with this fast moving environment.

In response, we must work collaboratively and cooperatively to maximise our effectiveness. For example, across the UK devolved administrations through our teams in Edinburgh, Belfast and Cardiff, with UK digital regulators through the Digital Regulation Cooperation Forum (DRCF), through effective bilateral relationships with other UK regulators and with our international counterparts on a range of cross-border issues. Whilst we work collaboratively, we must also remain alert to those risks and opportunities where we are uniquely able to act.

The Government intends to legislate for a further upgrade to UK data protection law midway through the life of this plan. This includes the intention to introduce a new constitutional governance model for the ICO.

These are changes to our remit and constitution, but this ICO25 plan anticipates, embraces and looks beyond those changes. It provides certainty for a longer-term future for the organisations we regulate, the

public whose interests we serve and for all ICO colleagues.

Strategic enduring objectives

Our purpose is to empower you through information. We have set ourselves four enduring objectives which explain what we will do to make sure our work is focused on delivering our purpose.

We will set our annual priorities against these objectives and report our progress to Parliament and our wider stakeholders.

Our enduring objectives guide what we will do, as well as what we will not do. They also show how we will allocate our resources to support the delivery of each objective.

Objective one: Safeguard and empower people

Particularly the most vulnerable, by upholding our information rights and enabling us all to confidently contribute to a thriving society and sustainable economy.

- We will do more to understand the views and concerns of the diverse UK public and use these to guide our priorities. We will focus our interventions on areas of greatest harm and risk and take enforcement action where necessary to make a real difference to people's lives.
- We will help people to understand their information rights so they can confidently decide how best to use and trust the products and services in our daily lives that require our information.
- We will continue to tackle predatory marketing, in particular where it is focused on vulnerable people, using the anticipated increase in our powers to have a greater impact.
- We will do more to supervise the cyber security of relevant digital service providers and systems to protect people's information.
- We will be transparent in the decisions we take when using our legitimate discretion, recognising that we have finite resources and we are unable to look into every matter raised with us.

Objective two: Empower responsible innovation and sustainable economic growth

By providing regulatory certainty about what the law requires, reducing the cost of compliance and clarifying what we will do if things go wrong. This enables those we regulate to confidently plan, invest and innovate with confidence.

- We will support the responsible use and sharing of personal information to drive innovation and economic growth, focusing our efforts on those at the cutting edge of innovation or legitimately without in-house support, such as SMEs.
- We will create a fairer playing field for those demonstrating good practice by taking action against those who try to gain unfair advantage through unlawful or irresponsible actions.
- We will take an evidence-led and predictable approach to our enforcement action based on the potential risk posed or actual harm caused. We will help organisations learn from mistakes.
- Our interventions will always be justified. We will make them in a timely and effective manner, providing certainty for organisations and a clear deterrent against serious non-compliance leading to significant

harm.

- We will cooperate and collaborate with our regulatory counterparts and a range of stakeholders domestically and internationally. This provides consistency in the law, maximises certainty for people on what protections they can expect, and gives clarity to businesses and organisations on what standards we expect. It also helps minimise costs to businesses straddling multiple regulatory regimes.
- We will amplify our advice and guidance through sectoral regulators and sector representative associations where our regulatory responsibilities align.

Objective three: Promote openness, transparency and accountability

Supporting the development of a modern Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) practice framework in the UK, inspiring confidence in public services and democracy.

- We will support administration of FOIA or the EIR by helping public authorities to be more open through advice, tools, practice directions and promoting proactive publication of information routinely.
- We will evolve the FOIA and EIR framework within our jurisdiction by experimenting with ways to encourage public authorities to be more transparent and open, avoiding the need for people to escalate appeals to the ICO.
- We will ensure we provide timely responses, in our role as adjudicator, leading by example and inspiring the public sector to do the same.
- We will innovate when looking for improved outcomes for people and efficiencies from our appeals service. We will be transparent in our approach, explaining any necessary trade-offs as we work to provide best value for money for the government grant-in-aid which funds this important work.

Objective four: Driven by our values, we'll continuously develop the ICO's culture, capability and capacity

To deliver impactful regulatory outcomes, be recognised as an effective provider of public services, a knowledgeable and influential regulator and a great place to work and develop.

To do this, we believe ICO25 calls for a shift of approach in five key elements of our work. They are:

- **Prioritising with simplicity and agility** – understanding what we are prioritising and why, what we aim to achieve and how to achieve it at pace. We must also understand when and how to move on to our next priority.
- **Being more inclusive and empathetic in our regulatory interventions** – improving our insight and understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by those we regulate and the people we protect. We must reach new audiences, particularly the ones most in need of our support and protection, using language and tone which demonstrates our understanding of the world we regulate and not just the laws we oversee.
- **Operating transparently to provide great customer service** – giving special focus to sharing our information, knowledge and insight routinely and extensively. We must do this in ways which support its reuse and through tools, products and services which provide practical outcomes as well as advice.

- **Improving regulatory certainty** – allowing our expectations to be understood, our actions to be predicted and our advice relied on. We do this to clearly prevent serious harm and reduce the cost of compliance. For instance, we will not tolerate organisations who are using people’s information to exploit them or expose them to harm, and we will not take action against organisations who share data to safeguard vulnerable people. Regulatory certainty does not mean we will provide certainty about every aspect of the law in every individual case.
- **Maximising the technical capability of our people and systems** – transforming our workforce capability, realising the full benefits of digital tools and our data assets to increase our impact from the resources we invest. We must approach all that we do in ways which improve productivity, efficiency and the value we offer for the tax payers and fee payers who fund our work.

Values and behaviours

Working as one ICO, our values and behaviours describe and drive how we will achieve our objectives. They guide our thinking and actions and the way we work with one another, our customers and our stakeholders. They underpin our purpose and are vital to the way we will deliver our objectives.

Curious

We believe in continuous learning, empowering our teams to experiment and innovate and are eager for new or different perspectives to inform our work.

We are curious enough to consider new ideas and agile enough to explore them effectively.

We are curious, empathetic and actively interested in understanding all perspectives. We particularly use this to make our expectations of those we regulate as simple as possible to implement.

We regularly ask ourselves why, and why not, and seek creative opportunities and solutions to both recurring and new situations.

We challenge each other constructively, supporting each other to find the best outcome.

Collaborative

We work together in ways which enable us to prioritise, support our agility and our collective and individual high performance. This enables us to successfully execute our plans by responding to emerging risks and opportunities at pace but without sacrificing our high standards.

We move fast together so we can fix things in ways which are timely and relevant for our customers, stakeholders and colleagues.

We experiment together, learn and continuously improve. If it doesn't work, we learn from it quickly and make changes.

Impactful

We thrive on delivering at pace and with impact, by being selective to be effective. This will help us to ensure our important work makes a material difference. We take pride in our high performance.

We set clear objectives and make timely, informed decisions, using evidence and insight. We also measure and evaluate our work.

We achieve high performance by empowering people to take personal ownership and accountability. We learn from our mistakes, continuously develop and celebrate our successes.

Respect, equality, diversity and inclusivity

We embrace inclusive ways of working. We respect each other and our stakeholders, customers and colleagues and treat all with dignity.

We want diverse teams that are filled with talent and reflect our society, so our organisation can thrive and perform at our very best.

We are curious to understand all perspectives, recognising the value that they bring. We actively encourage equality, diversity and inclusion in our working and thinking.

How we will know if we have achieved our objectives?

Through this ICO25 plan and its enduring objectives, we are committing to:

- Safeguard and empower people.
- Empower responsible innovation and sustainable economic growth.
- Promote openness, transparency and accountability.
- Continuously develop the ICO's culture, capability and capacity.

In our purpose, we say that we will empower you to hold us to account for the difference we make when enforcing the laws we oversee. To enable you to do this, we invite our performance to be judged through measures in three key areas: sentiment, outcomes and performance.

Sentiment

The impact and influence of the work we do; to understand the cumulative effect of our performance and outcomes.

These measures are intended to hold us to account for the achievement of our purpose and enduring strategic objectives.

Outcomes

The outcome and effectiveness of the work we do; based on objective research to understand the difference our services and interventions make for people and organisations.

These measures will focus on what happens as a result of the work we do. This includes whether our advice and guidance is helpful, practical and proportionate and whether our interventions have reduced, maintained or improved standards and made things easier and clearer.

Performance

The efficiency and timeliness of the services we provide, focused on output and throughput measures.

We will publish these measures on a quarterly basis and they will cover the range of services we provide to our customers. This includes:

- how long we take to respond to the requests for advice and complaints we receive;
- how long our investigations take to complete;
- how quickly we respond to requests for information; and
- satisfaction with our services from our customers and the businesses we work with.

Each of our objectives have measures which we will use to demonstrate delivery and to enable our stakeholders to hold us to account.

1. Safeguard and empower people

Sentiment and outcomes

We aim to demonstrate that our work has improved the awareness, understanding and effective use of information rights across society. To do this, we will measure, and expect to see improvement in:

- awareness of data protection rights, and understanding of how to exercise these rights, with particular attention to understanding how information rights can benefit certain socio-economic groups from underrepresented or vulnerable communities;
- the number of people able to use individual data protection rights effectively as demonstrated by a reduction in number of upheld complaints about exercising rights;
- diversity in the customers accessing our services (including our public-facing live services, our guidance and our website information); and
- awareness of the ICO and confidence in what we do.

Performance

It is our aim to respond in real time to complaints, requests for information and advice and to conduct our investigations as efficiently and effectively as possible. To track our progress, we will use the following measures:

- assess and respond to 80% of data protection complaints within 90 days;
- assess and respond to 90% of data protection complaints within six months;
- ensure that less than 1% of our data protection complaints caseload are over 12 months old;
- no complaint cases referred to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) about the ICO upheld;
- investigate and respond to 90% of service complaints within 30 calendar days;
- conclude 95% of all formal investigations within 12 months of them starting;
- respond to 100% of all information access requests within statutory timescales; and
- achieve a customer satisfaction index (CSI) score of 74.

2. Empower responsible innovation and sustainable economic growth

Sentiment and outcomes

We aim to demonstrate that our work has reduced compliance burdens and costs for businesses through providing support, guidance and regulatory clarity. To do this, we will measure, and expect to see improvement in:

- agreement that work of the ICO reduces compliance costs;
- agreement that data protection laws are an enabler of business; and
- agreement that the ICO is clear about what the law requires.

Performance

It is our aim to respond in real time to complaints, requests for information and advice and to conduct our investigations as efficiently and effectively as possible. To track our progress, we will use the following measures:

- resolve 80% of written enquiries within seven calendar days;
- resolve 99% of written enquiries within 30 calendar days;
- answer 80% of calls and live chats within 60 seconds;
- refer or close 80% of personal data breach reports within 30 days;
- ensure that less than 1% of personal data breach reports are over 12 months old;
- ensure 90% of our audit recommendations are accepted in full or in part;
- ensure 80% of accepted audit recommendations, in full or in part, are completed or being actioned within agreed timescales; and
- respond to 100% of prior consultation submissions within statutory timeframes.

3. Promote openness and transparency

Sentiment and outcomes

We aim to demonstrate that our work has increased openness and transparency across the public sector. To do this, we will measure, and expect to see improvement in:

- awareness of access to information rights, and understanding of how to exercise these rights, with particular attention to understanding how information rights can benefit certain socio-economic groups from underrepresented or vulnerable communities;
- the number of people being able to use individual access to information rights effectively as demonstrated by a reduction in number of upheld complaints about exercising rights;
- improved compliance in request response timeliness across the public sector; and
- compliance with the right of access, demonstrated by a reduction in the number of complaints to us regarding the right of access.

Performance

It is our target to respond in real time to complaints, requests for information and advice and investigations. To track our progress, we will use the following measures:

- reach a decision and respond to 80% of freedom of information (FOI) complaints within six months;
- ensure that less than 1% of our FOI caseload is over 12 months old;
- 66% of FOI tribunal hearings to be in our favour;
- publish 100% of our FOI case outcomes; and
- publish all recommendations made in our FOI complaints handling and audit work.

4. Continuously develop the ICO's culture, capacity and capability.

In order to continuously develop the way we work to deliver the ambitions in this plan, we have identified five 'shifts of approach'. These shifts represent what we have to do differently to make sure ICO25 is successful:

Prioritising with simplicity and agility

Understanding what we are prioritising and why, what we aim to achieve and how to achieve it at pace. We must also understand when and how to move on to our next priority.

To demonstrate whether this has been achieved effectively we have set the following measures:

- increased awareness of what we are going to prioritise and deprioritised from both staff and stakeholders and of how these decisions are made;
- identification of clear objectives and delivery within agreed milestones for all PACE work; and
- improvements in our performance measures set out above.

Being more inclusive and empathetic in our regulatory interventions

Improving our insight and understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by those we regulate and the people we protect. We must reach new audiences, particularly the ones most in need of our support and protection, using language and tone which demonstrates our understanding of the world we regulate and not just the laws we oversee.

To demonstrate whether this has been achieved effectively we have set the following measures:

- increased number of stakeholders agreeing that the ICO understands the issues they face;
- increased agreement that ICO guidance is proportionate, accessible and tailored;
- increased agreement that our impact assessments take account of a broad range of society and the economy; and
- reduction in the percentage of organisations that feel that data protection laws are a barrier for trading with businesses.

Operating transparently to provide great customer service

Giving special focus to sharing our information, knowledge and insight routinely and extensively. We must do this in ways which support its reuse and through tools, products and services which provide practical outcomes as well as advice.

To demonstrate whether this has been achieved effectively we have set the following measures:

- reduction in the number of avoidable or unnecessary contacts;
- increased agreement that our codes and guidance are being used and followed and are making a difference;
- increased number of stakeholders report that they got the information they needed from the ICO quickly and clearly; and
- reduction in number of avoidable advice calls and written enquiries from members of the public and businesses.

Improving regulatory certainty

Allowing our expectations to be understood, our actions to be predicted and our advice relied on. We do this to clearly prevent serious harm and reduce the cost of compliance. For instance, we will not tolerate organisations who are using people's information to exploit them or expose them to harm, and we will not take action against organisations who share data to safeguard vulnerable people. Regulatory certainty does not mean we will provide certainty about every aspect of the law in every individual case.

To demonstrate whether this has been achieved effectively we have set the following measures:

- increased confidence that stakeholders understand our likely regulatory position on a range of issues;
- increased agreement that the ICO is clear about what the law requires;
- reduction in the percentage of businesses who said they spent a disproportionate amount of time working out the requirements of the UK data protection law; and
- increase in the percentage of businesses who said they found ICO guidance to be clear and easy to understand.

Maximising the technical capability of our people and systems

Transforming our workforce capability, realising the full benefits of digital tools and our data assets to increase our impact from the resources we invest. We must approach all that we do in ways which improve productivity, efficiency and the value we offer for the tax payers and fee payers who fund our work.

To demonstrate whether this has been achieved effectively we have set the following measures:

- increased confidence from stakeholders that we understand and anticipate developments in the external environment;
- reduction in the percentage of businesses who said data protection had prevented the implementation of a new or improved product, business model or product;
- overall financial year-end outturn is within +/-3% of income;
- increased staff engagement; and
- increase in the percentage of organisations who have heard of the ICO and know what it is.

Annual action plan: October 2022 – October 2023

Our priorities for the year ahead

Our annual plan outlines the priority work we will deliver over the coming year to help us achieve our strategic enduring objectives. Our first ICO25 annual plan starts when we expect ICO25 to be finalised following public consultation. We will update it every year to demonstrate what we will be doing to achieve our objectives. We will be accountable for these actions and will report progress against them in our next annual report in July 2023 and each year thereafter.

We have prioritised these actions using our evidence-based assessment of risks and harms and aligned them to each of our enduring objectives. Alongside these actions, we have an ICO25 transformation programme. This will be finalised by October 2022 in response to our ICO25 plan and consultation. It will set out, quarter-by-quarter, how we are changing and transforming to respond to our ICO25 objectives and to achieve our purpose. This enables us to empower you through information by 2025. Our change and transformation programme will focus on developing:

- **what we do and who we do it for** – developing our regulatory approach to meet the needs of our customers and stakeholders;
- **how we do it** – ensuring we have the right capacity, capability and culture to operate effectively; and
- **the tools we need** – enabling us to do our work and providing the foundations for what we do and how we do it.

When this annual plan is finalised post-public consultation it will also include an overview of roles and responsibilities, confirming where accountability resides for its delivery.

Safeguard and empower the public

Empower people through a better understanding of how their information is used and accessed

Understanding how information is used is fundamental to people feeling empowered. However, it can be complicated and confusing to those not familiar with the law, particularly for some more vulnerable members of society. It is also easier for businesses and organisations to deal with questions about how data is used, particularly subject access requests (SARs), if there is clarity and consistency. SARs is an area that we receive a lot of complaints about, where we can provide additional support and guidance to both the public, businesses and organisations.

Subject access request tool – we will develop a subject access request tool to help people make requests in ways which will help organisations to respond effectively. The tool will help people identify where to send their requests and explain what they should expect. The receiving organisation will receive information from the ICO to help them respond quickly and simply.

Help people to understand their rights – we will make sure that when people have questions, we provide them with easy access to answers, using technology and our expertise to develop FAQs. We will make sure our services are accessible to customers with differing needs and share stories of how we have made a difference to people's lives to help them understand what our work means to them. However, we recognise that some people prefer, and in fact need, to speak to someone. We will speak and listen to people to help resolve their problem.

Understand public sentiment to better serve a diverse population

We know there are parts of society and the economy which need our support but are not yet aware of our work. It is often those who would benefit the most from information rights that are not aware of how to access them. It is our role to ensure that all members of society are able to use and understand their rights.

Insight and research – We will develop our insight and research capabilities, including a deep dive into the attitudes and habits of different parts of the population, especially those we currently do not engage with. We will also gain better insight into issues that affect the most vulnerable in society.

Community outreach – we will reach out to communities and vulnerable groups we have not previously engaged with partnering with special interest and representative groups to identify issues that are affecting them and act on that information. We will identify groups that would benefit from a greater understanding of their information rights, taking into account the wider economic and social environment.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) – we will ensure that we appropriately consider EDI in all our regulatory remit activities and decision-making.

Safeguard the most vulnerable

We need to even up the power balance between those who hold our most precious data and the most vulnerable who hand over their data, often with little knowledge of their rights. People need confidence in their privacy in order to participate in society - to share their personal information to access innovations and services, confident their information rights will be respected. That is particularly true of vulnerable groups who have no choice but to share their information with organisations in order to be able to access services and receive the support they crucially need.

For the period until October 2023, we will focus our investigation and project work on the following issues:

Children's privacy – we will continue to enforce our Children's code and influence industry to ensure children benefit from an age-appropriate online experience. We will:

- press for further changes by social media platforms, video and music streaming sites and gaming platforms to correctly assess children's ages and conform with the Children's code guidelines about profiling children and sharing their data. We will continue to push for improved transparency and use of privacy notices children can understand. We will also consider changes to the code required by legislative reform on data protection and to promote closer policy alignment with the Online Safety Bill; and
- continue our investigations where organisations are not conforming with the code and take appropriate enforcement action. We will share examples of good practice from our direct engagement with organisations to encourage wider positive change. We will work with Ofcom through the DRCF to promote joined up and effective regulation to protect the privacy and safety of children online.

Impact of technology on vulnerable groups - rapid technological change is transforming how people's data is collected and used. By being responsive to emerging technologies we can guide organisations in a timely way – helping them adopt new technologies and ensuring that people are protected.

- AI-driven discrimination has become an issue that can have damaging consequences for people's lives. For example, being rejected for a job or not getting the financial support they are entitled to, a risk particularly acute for vulnerable groups. We will be investigating concerns over the use of algorithms to sift recruitment applications, which could be negatively impacting employment opportunities of those from diverse backgrounds. We will also set out our expectations through refreshed guidance for AI developers on ensuring that algorithms treat people and their information fairly.
- Biometric technologies - like gait analysis, facial recognition, iris scanning and fingerprint recognition, are becoming cheaper and more powerful. They are beginning to drive innovative new services across the finance, entertainment, health and education sectors. While these biometrics have immense promise, we also need to be alert to risks – especially around emotion recognition technologies, which can discriminate against certain vulnerable groups. We will be working with industry to set out our expectations on how these technologies should be used and investigating how these technologies are being deployed for any adverse impacts on vulnerable groups.
- Online tracking is used to gather data for purposes ranging from advertising to age estimation. We will influence changes such as the phasing out of third-party cookies to create a more privacy-oriented internet. We will work with government, industry and other regulators to give web users meaningful control over how they are tracked online and move away from cookie pop-ups.
- CCTV – we will look at how this technology is being used in various settings, particularly in care homes, and set out clear guidance.

Deprivation – we will work on issues that may aggravate, or be aggravated by, the cost of living crisis.

This includes:

- work with the financial industry on how they use and collect intelligence databases;
- looking at the use of algorithms within the benefits system;
- exploring the use of targeted advertising (adtech) of gambling on social media and the use of personal information within the gambling sector; and
- continuing to focus on predatory marketing calls and data-enabled scams and frauds targeting vulnerable people online and on social media.

Personal safety – particularly the approach of police forces to collecting personal information from victims of rape and serious sexual assault cases and data sharing to prevent domestic homicide and to support safeguarding.

Enable sector-based resolution of data protection complaints

People should be able to access services and support as quickly and easily as possible when they encounter a data protection problem. The regulatory landscape can seem confusing, and it is important to simplify and minimise the number of potential routes people need to consider when faced with a data protection issue.

Co-ordinate with sector-specific ombudsmen or representative groups – we will explore ways of joining up services where there is already an existing service that customers can access, for example sector-specific ombudsmen services. In order to reduce the number of organisations someone with a complaint must deal with, we will explore the opportunity for these services to become the first point of contact for data protection complaints in their area of expertise or responsibility. The ICO will support this by providing technical advice, where needed.

Empower responsible innovation and sustainable economic growth

Bring down the burden or cost of compliance

Businesses and organisations should be able to use the regulator to access a wealth of knowledge. In particular, giving them simple ways to comply easily and proportionately with the law. To do this, we need to amplify our own work to help businesses learn from the experiences of others. This is particularly important for small- and medium-sized businesses who do not always have easy access to data protection expertise. We believe organisations benefit from the regulator sharing good practice examples, to help provide regulatory certainty and reduce the cost of compliance.

We will invest centrally in a series of services, tools and initiatives so organisations can benefit from the advice and support of the regulator when planning, innovating and managing information risk. Organisations will be able to select tools and products that are proportionate to their use of information.

We will act as a 'hub' for good information rights practice, so organisations can access real-life examples of what the law requires and what good looks like. These services will be accessible and, wherever proportionate, digital by default and based on self-service principles. They will utilise AI and robotic processing to increase the value we offer for the statutory charge which funds our work.

To do this, we will:

- publish our internal data protection and freedom of information training materials on our website for reuse by the organisations we regulate;
- create a database where we publish all our 'one-off' pieces of advice to organisations and the public in anonymous and reusable form;
- create a database where we publish our recommendations made following complaints, investigations or audits, including both examples of improved practice and best or good practice. We will publish these materials as a series of anonymous case studies that are searchable and reusable;
- produce a range of off-the-shelf products or templates to help organisations develop their own proportionate accountability or privacy management programmes based on freely-available, scalable tools and products provided by us;
- create, host and moderate a forum for organisations to discuss and debate compliance questions and standards online, bringing together experts; and
- bring together businesses and organisations to learn and share with us and each other through our Data Protection Practitioners' Conference and other stakeholder engagement events. We will increase access and reduce costs by holding them virtually where our objectives are best met this way.

Provide assured regulatory advice

Early assured advice and support from the regulator when developing new business models, products and services will provide regulatory certainty for organisations and enable investment. Providing clarity to businesses about the baseline standards expected will also help them to gain a competitive advantage. This

will differentiate them from other businesses through demonstrating their commitment to protecting their customers' information.

We will provide assurance to organisations seeking to innovate. This will enable them to bank on the advice received from the regulator to execute their plans and initiatives with certainty and confidence.

Support innovators – we provide bespoke support to those innovating with personal information, proportionate to the innovation and risks involved. We will introduce Innovation Advice a fast, frank feedback service for innovators, and continue the in-depth innovation support offered by our Regulatory Sandbox and sectoral outreach offered by the Innovation Hub. This will help to reduce time and cost for organisations bringing products to market, with regulatory clarity provided at critical points in the design cycle of products.

Support SMEs – we will produce a range of 'data essentials' training and development modules and products specifically aimed at SMEs. This will enable them to publicly demonstrate their capability and commitment to the essential components of responsible data use. This will be based on 10 'essentials' products. Following a pilot during the first year of our ICO25 plan, we will develop these products into a 'data essentials' package for SMEs to self-assess their adherence to and share with their stakeholders and customers.

Deliver a programme of codes and certification, working with businesses and sectors to encourage the adoption of codes of conduct and certification schemes tailored to the needs of sectors and enabling organisations to demonstrate their commitment to compliance as a differentiator for customers.

Produce proportionate and transparent guidance to provide regulatory certainty

Being clear about what new guidance and codes we plan to produce and when will provide those we regulate with the opportunity to plan with certainty. Making sure that we reflect stakeholder views and economic impact in our guidance and codes is critical to ensuring they are proportionate. It also means organisations can implement our guidance effectively and understand what it means for them.

Produce and publish a 'guidance pipeline' to provide clarity and certainty to stakeholders. This pipeline will include our updated direct marketing and journalism statutory codes, an employment practices hub, guidance on research and subject access requests in law enforcement, guidance on emerging technology such as AI and biometrics and a programme of guidance reviews in response to forthcoming legislative reform.

Produce sector specific guidance by working with representative groups to co-design guidance that provides more tailored and targeted compliance advice using the language and addressing risks most relevant to different industry groups.

Consult with stakeholders through a broad range of activities to gain the widest possible input into the development of our statutory guidance and codes. This includes ensuring input from a wide range of voices, including stakeholder panels, consumer research and engagement and wider consultation, and publishing the results of this work.

Produce impact assessments for our work, where appropriate.

Encourage public sector standards and efficiency

The public sector holds vast amounts of personal information about UK citizens, including some of the most sensitive and confidential information about us all, such as healthcare, financial and demographic data. Often people don't have a choice about using public services, and they must share their information to access services, support, financial benefits or to comply with the law.

The public sector is also facing a challenging time in terms of resourcing and funding, and, even in this context, it is important that high standards are maintained. The post Covid-19 world offers an opportunity to build on some of the gains made during the pandemic in terms of innovative uses of information to improve public service delivery and maximise value for money and efficiency.

Form a Cross-Whitehall Senior Leadership Group to drive compliance and high standards on information. We will work with Government to influence high standards of data protection and to promote good information practices, meeting the framework set out by the National Data Strategy for how Government wants to work.

We will work with the Government to provide our expert advice, to assess and assure compliance and to identify information risk to enable innovation and prevent harm. We will encourage innovative solutions to the challenges facing the public sector and provide clear, consistent and proportionate advice to support the development of new ways of delivering for the public.

Revise approach for public sector fines and enforcement. We recognise that public money is best used to support the delivery of essential services. As such, we will review the approach we take to fining public sector organisations to ensure that, while individuals rights are still protected, money is not being diverted away from where it is needed the most.

Data sharing. We will continue to enable responsible data sharing through the promotion of our code of practice and practical tools to enable organisations to share information to improve services.

Advice and support. We will continue to help public sector organisations, giving in-depth feedback on consultations and impact assessments, as well as providing advice through our helpline and responding to written enquiries.

Deliver timely regulatory interventions

Stakeholders need to have confidence that the regulator will produce outcomes in a timely and responsive way. The longer it takes for us to respond to complaints, provide advice or deal with requests for information, the harder it is for organisations to understand what is required of them and for individuals to exercise their rights effectively. Organisations also need to know the outcomes of our investigations quickly, to allow them to plan and to reduce uncertainty for their stakeholders and customers. Equally, those who raise concerns with us should expect a timely response to their complaints.

The ICO also works in a rapidly changing external environment and many of the issues business, Government and the public sector expect us to respond to are fast-moving and require a multi-disciplinary approach. We need to be able to respond rapidly and with agility to new and emerging regulatory risks and opportunities.

Public service delivery – we will ensure all our operational caseloads are within our published service

standards by 31 March 2023. To do this, we will clear all our operational backlogs and ensure we are consistently meeting, and in many cases exceeding, our present service standards. This will be a collective effort involving all ICO colleagues. Once complete, we will capitalise on the breadth of skills this will promote and introduce a resource model to enable us to continue to respond flexibly to unforeseen peaks in demand. Once we've achieved our current service standards, we will review them ahead of 2023/24 for opportunities to continuously improve.

Investigations – we will deliver the outcomes of our investigations quicker and be more transparent about the time it will take to reach certain milestones in our investigations.

Be more transparent about what regulatory action we are taking and why. We will continue with investigations for no longer than necessary to achieve the desired result, and then refocus our resources elsewhere.

Introduce Pace teams for our discretionary regulatory work. It will be based on taking an agile approach and will use multi-disciplinary project teams to research and, where necessary, make a proportionate regulatory intervention. It will operate within defined time, cost and scope parameters. We will continue to identify potential or actual regulatory risks and opportunities using our strategic assessment and risk methodology. We will be transparent about what work these teams will be doing and will publish timescales in which we expect them to complete and report on their work.

Understand and respond to emerging technologies and trends – we will identify key issues that will influence the way that personal data is used. We will focus our efforts on areas such as the regulation of biometrics, facial recognition technology and the use of AI and algorithms and health data. We also recognise that privacy-enhancing technologies can facilitate safe, legal and economically beneficial data sharing. Our tools will make it simpler for organisations to use privacy-enhancing technologies to reduce data protection risks. Working with other digital regulators, we will clearly set out our views on emerging technologies to reduce burdens on businesses, support innovation and prevent harms.

Enable international data flows through regulatory certainty

Enabling global trade by making the international flow of data as frictionless as possible supports economic growth. It also increases customer trust in how their information is handled and kept safe. Adequacy and Binding Corporate Rules (BCR) assessments will enable UK businesses to easily transfer data to other countries, safe in the knowledge that the regulator has provided assurances about how their customers' data will be protected overseas.

Adequacy assessments – we provide advice to Government when they assess and determine the adequacy of other countries data protection regimes. We will provide an opinion to the Secretary of State to support their consideration of draft regulations as they are laid. Adequacy regulations allow businesses and law enforcement agencies to send personal information to these countries, saving them time and money.

BCRs – we will improve the BCR approval process by removing duplication in the application forms and speeding up approval process.

Involvement in legislative reform

We need to ensure the ICO retains an influential voice in the development of any new legislation that has the potential to impact on the organisations we regulate and the remit of the regulator. We can help shape the future of the regulatory regime. This is because of the wealth of experience we have in implementing the law, and our understanding of the challenges organisations face and where improvements can be made.

We also have a unique ability to understand the impact of changes across the broad range of our regulatory responsibilities. Understanding the changes that are proposed will help us prepare businesses and organisations effectively, to reduce transition costs and any friction resulting from changes in the regulatory regime. Engaging with the legislative reform process will enable us to give proportionate and helpful advice in the future on how to comply and what changes mean for those we regulate and for the public.

Timely and impactful advice – we will continue to invest in proportionate resources to provide timely and impactful advice to Government as legislative reforms are proposed and developed.

Promote openness, transparency and accountability

Enable the public's access to information

We have an important role to play in providing certainty to the public sector on what they should and could make public, through learning from our regulatory interventions and decisions. We are also in a unique position to work with organisations and requesters, enabling outcomes that help public authorities to get the right information to requesters at the right time.

Publish our decisions – we will publish statistics and information on all the FOI cases we make decisions and take action on, to help clarify our regulatory approach.

Dispute resolution – we will provide a service to help public authorities to better understand what requesters are trying to achieve and resolve their request.

FOI ease of access – we will support members of the public to make an FOI request by promoting the use of tools to help them do so. This will help clarity so public authorities find requests easier to handle. It will make it easier for those who are not familiar with the law to access information.

Focus our FOI resources effectively

The ICO has limited FOI funding and cannot cross-fund its activities from other income. At the same time, there has been a sustained increase in the number of cases brought to us, as well as an increased need to work proactively with public authorities to support and guide them.

Agile approach to FOI appeals – we will move quickly, recognising that is important to provide a timely outcome, respecting that the Tribunal may not always agree with our decision.

Prioritising FOI complaints – we will not deal with every FOI complaint or appeal in the same way. We will make objective decisions to prioritise our work based on open and transparent criteria and public interest.

Better FOI – we will run a programme of activity to ensure our work on FOI is as efficient and effective as possible, with more upstream regulation and systemic enforcement to improve frontline services.

Driven by our values, continuously develop the ICO's culture, capability and capacity

Enable efficiency, productivity and collaboration

In order to deliver for our stakeholders, we need to work with a collective purpose as a team, acting in a collaborative way, increasing our productivity and the quality of our outputs. Given the breadth of the work of the ICO, it is important that we are agile, efficient and constantly looking for ways to improve how we deliver our work.

Refresh our People Strategy, which will focus on how we develop and support our staff to deliver.

Refresh our Digital and IT Strategy, which will set out the next phase of our investment in technology to improve productivity and efficiency.

Implement an Enterprise Resource Planning system to coordinate and effectively manage our finance and people services and data.

Develop a data strategy that adapts to the opportunities and challenges of technical innovation, using best data practice to continuously evolve how we capture, analyse, share and use data both internally and externally.

Review our governance structures to make sure that they are proportionate, focused on adding value and enabling the successful delivery of this plan and the future legislative reform.

Provide value for money for data protection fee payers

95% of the fees we receive that fund our data protection work come from small- and medium-sized organisations. We know that those who pay the fee, as well as Parliament to whom we are accountable for how we spend the fees, are right to expect value for money services, particularly considering the challenging economic environment.

We will make sure that, wherever possible, money paid in fees is used to provide regulatory certainty, give advice and support to organisations and reduce the cost of compliance. To do this we will:

- recover the costs of litigation, as far as is possible, from companies who have been fined;
- ensure that all organisations that are required to register do so;
- publish annually a value for money summary of how the data protection fees we receive, and the funding we get from the government, is used to deliver efficient and effective services for our customers; and
- agree a policy for using our data protection fee income reserves to ensure all fee income is used to support businesses and enable growth.