

1 Strictly private? What is personal data?

Aims

- This session will explore what we mean by 'personal data' and whether everything that is *personal* needs to be *private*.
- Students will discuss how they share information.
- Students will be able to explore what kinds of personal data might be held about them and by whom.
- They will be introduced to the role of the **Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)** and some of the legal and regulatory framework protecting personal data.

Learning objectives

By the end of the session, students will be able to:

- explain what they mean by the term 'personal data';
- discuss levels of privacy appropriate to a range of personal data; and
- explain the role of the **ICO**.

Teachers might find it helpful to explore background information on personal information and the Data Protection Act at ico.org.uk/for-the-public/personal-information before running this activity

Starter activity (15 mins)

1. Show PowerPoint 1, slide 3 to the group. Can students guess what it shows?



Teacher note: It shows a global internet traffic map for an average day in October 2012. It illustrates how we live in a world where information flows from person to person, organisation to organisation, machine to machine, 24/7.

2. How do students in the group contribute to this flow of information in their everyday lives?

Ask students to work in pairs to compile a list of ways in which they contribute to this vast global flow of internet traffic. If necessary, prompt the start of the list – Facebook? YouTube? Flickr? Blog? Emails? Texts? Online shopping? Gaming?

3. Take feedback from the group – in what ways do they contribute to global internet traffic?

4. Potentially, there are large amounts of information about each one of us 'out there'.

Ask the group to consider what kind of information they have put out there about themselves. Are they happy or comfortable with the situation?

Teacher note: As a bridge to the lesson's main activity, suggest students think about the following:

- How many people have access to their information?
- How many organisations?
- Are there people or organisations with information about them that they wish they didn't have?

Main activity

(35 mins)

1. Tell the group they are going to consider some questions about personal information.

Teacher note: You could ask – *What is 'personal' information anyway?*

Can the group suggest a difference between **personal** information and **private** information? For example:

- Information about me that I'm comfortable having made public for anyone to know.
- Information about me that only certain people should be able to know.



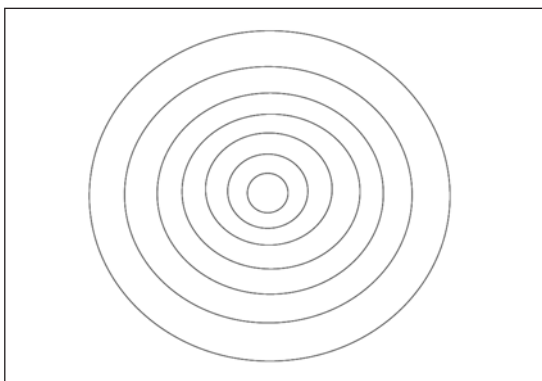
2. Tell students you would like them to consider the questions:

Do we share everything with everyone?

Who needs to know what?

Working in pairs or small groups, ask students to list as many people or organisations they can think of that hold information about them.

3. Take feedback and share lists. Show PowerPoint 1, slide 4. If we were to think of ourselves at the centre of a pool of information, which people and which organisations should know – need to know – most about us? E.g. where would they place parents, friends, school, bank, employers, police and so on?



4. Next, ask students to think about what **types** of personal information they are happy to have held about them in these different zones.

Teacher note: Encourage students to suggest **types** of information rather than actual information. Start by suggesting some examples – which zone would be OK for contact information? Health record? Exam grades? Financial information? Criminal record?

Plenary (10 mins)

1. Pose the question: Should there be **rules** about our personal information, such as who can see it, where it should be stored, who it can be shared with?

2. Tell students that there is an organisation set up to safeguard information rights – the **Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)**. Show PowerPoint 1, slide 4 showing a brief outline of the **ICO's** mission. (We will look more closely at the work of the **ICO** in following lessons.)



3. Final thoughts: From the session they have just completed, which words or phrases would they highlight from the list on PowerPoint 1, slide 5 as being the most relevant and important in terms of safeguarding all of our personal data?