

Press release: Digital and Culture Secretary urges businesses and charities to prepare for stronger data protection laws

- Data out today shows fewer than half of businesses and charities are aware of new data laws
- Awareness in construction and manufacturing sectors particularly low
- Organisations should follow ICO guidance as well as improve their cyber security

Fewer than half of all businesses and charities are aware of new data protection laws four months before they come into force, according to [new research](#) released today.

Businesses in the finance and insurance sectors have the highest awareness of the changes to be brought in through the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) , which is to be implemented in UK law via the Data Protection Bill in May 2018, as part of plans to help the UK prepare for a successful Brexit.

Businesses in the construction industry have the lowest awareness, with only one in four aware of the incoming regulation. Awareness is higher among businesses that report their senior managers consider cyber security is a fairly high or a very high priority, with two in five aware of the GDPR.

The survey finds more than a quarter of businesses and charities who had heard of the regulation made changes to their operations ahead of the new laws coming into force.

Among those making changes, just under half of businesses, and just over one third of charities, made changes to cyber security practices, including creating or improving cyber security procedures, hiring new staff and installing or updating anti-virus software.

Speaking from Davos, where he is banging the drum for the UK's world-leading tech sector and reaffirming the nation's commitment to artificial intelligence [AI], Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Matt Hancock said:

We are strengthening the UK's data protection laws to make them fit for the digital age by giving people more control over their own data.

And as these figures show many organisations still need to act to make sure the personal data they hold is secure and they are prepared for our Data Protection Bill.

There is a wealth of free help and guidance available from the Information Commissioner's Office and the National Cyber Security Centre, and I encourage all those affected to take it up.

The UK tops the list in Europe for global tech investors, with its tech firms attracting more venture capital funding than any other European country in 2017. In December it was named by Oxford Insights as the best prepared country in the world for AI implementation.

While in Davos, Mr Hancock will talk up the nation's innovators in speeches covering policymaking for the Fourth Industrial Revolution and Generation AI.

On the day new statistics on data preparedness are released, Mr Hancock makes clear the Government's Data Protection Bill will provide people with the confidence their data will be managed securely and safely while also supporting those innovative businesses to maximise the potential benefits of increasing use of data in the digital economy.

The Bill will give Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) more power to defend consumer interests and issue higher fines, of up to £17 million or 4 per cent of global turnover, for the most serious data breaches.

Organisations which hold and process personal data are urged to prepare and follow the [guidance and sector FAQs](#) freely available from the ICO. Its [dedicated advice line for small organisations](#) has received more than 8000 calls since it opened in November 2017, and the [Guide to the GDPR](#) has had over one million views. The regulator also has a [GDPR checklist](#), and [12 steps to take now to prepare for GDPR](#).

There is still time to prepare and many organisations will already be compliant with the new rules. Businesses already complying with the existing Data Protection Act are well on the way to being ready for GDPR.

There will be no regulatory 'grace' period, but the ICO is a fair and proportionate regulator. Those who self-report, who engage with the ICO to resolve issues and demonstrate effective accountability, can expect this to be taken into account when the ICO considers taking action.

Information Commissioner Elizabeth Denham said:

Data protection law reforms put consumers and citizens first.

People will have greater control over how their data is used and organisations will have to be transparent and account for their actions.

This is a step change in the law; businesses, public bodies and charities need to take steps now to ensure they are ready.

Organisations that thrive under the new rules will be those that commit to the spirit of data protection and embed it in their

policies, processes and people.

The GDPR offers a real opportunity to present themselves on the basis of how they respect the privacy of individuals, and over time this can play more of a role in consumer choice. Enhanced customer trust and more competitive advantage are just two of the benefits of getting it right.

Our website is packed with information to help your organisation to get prepared for May 2018.

Businesses are recommended to follow free guidance on protecting themselves from online attacks published by National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), such as the [Cyber Essentials](#) advice and the [Small Business Guide](#).

Notes to editors

- GDPR will require organisations to have appropriate measures in place to protect personal data. This could include:
 - Documenting what data the organisation holds.
 - Reviewing privacy notices.
 - Updating procedures around individual's rights. For example, how an organisation would delete personal data if asked.
 - Planning how to handle subject access requests.
 - Reviewing how consent to process data is gained.
 - Considering children, and whether age verification or parental consent is required.
 - Having procedures in place to detect, report and investigate data breaches.
- Assigning a data protection officer.
- In the wake of recent high-profile data breaches, businesses and charities are being urged to update their cyber security protections. Cyber security measures businesses and charities can take up to help protect their data include:
 - Using strong passwords and always downloading software updates
 - Adopting the [Cyber Essentials](#) scheme to protect against the most common threats
- Following cyber security guidance available from the [National Cyber Security Centre](#).
- The data was gathered as part of the [DCMS Cyber Security Breaches Survey](#). This is an annual study examining the scale and impact of cyber incidents on businesses and charities, including how they manage and respond to such incidents. The full 2018 survey will be published in the Spring.
- The [survey](#) covers 1,500 businesses and 500 charities and underpins the

DCMS's work delivering parts of the Government's five-year £1.9 billion National Cyber Security Strategy.

- For more info call DCMS Press Office on 020 7211 2210.