



The Ripple Effect

Cat Evans O'Brien, Head of Communities
Third Sector Conference, 18 June 2025

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Information Commissioner's Office



<https://vimeo.com/1045047018>



It was one **admin error.**

I HAD TO CHANGE MY ADDRESS.

Data breaches can cause a ripple effect
that disrupts someone's life.
You can make a difference.

ico.org.uk/RIPPLE



It was one **admin error.**

I HAD TO LEAVE HOME.

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The ripple effect...

...arising from the breach itself

I have avoided using public services through a fear of more people finding out about my status.

We were concerned the adoption wouldn't progress because our location had been disclosed, and there were safeguarding concerns.

I had to move into temporary emergency accommodation, with my children, after my location was leaked.

The worry of my mistake has made me ill. It's been such a relief to talk to you, I can finally breathe!

(Data controller)

I felt forced out of my job following the discrimination I experienced after my status was exposed in the work-place.

The ripple effect...

...arising from the organisation's response

I don't know who I can share my information with anymore. Will they keep it safe?

Organisations don't acknowledge or recognise the impact a breach has had on them in case they "open the floodgates"

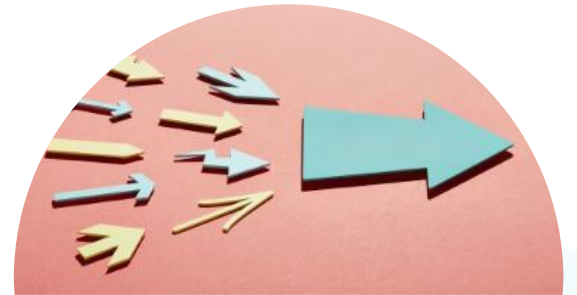
The places you would usually turn to for help (GPs, social services, lawyers) can be the ones who hurt you most.

It wasn't taken seriously as an issue. It was just brushed under the carpet, it's a mistake, just human error. But this is my life.

I was treated as a 'criminal' not a 'victim', receiving letters from the organisation's lawyers, rather than an acknowledgement.

What do people want (and why does this matter)?

- Altruism
- Justice
- Validation
- Moving on
- Compensation



The ICO has listened...

I'm worried that my information has been shared...

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What can I do?

- You have a right to understand what's happened. You can contact the organisation and ask them to explain.
- You should try to keep a record of any contact.
- We have a template letter that you can use to contact the organisation and guidance to help you.

What will happen?

- The organisation should respond to you within one month.
- If you're not happy with the response, or don't receive one, we can help you decide what to do next.

How can the ICO help me?

- You can speak to us, we are here to support you.
- We can help you to decide if making a complaint is right for you, and give you practical advice such as steps you can take to protect your information.
- If you do decide to complain to us, we will look into what has happened, and may make recommendations to the organisation to improve.
- Speaking to us early can help us to support you to resolve the issue.

Call our helpline: 0303 123 1113

Visit our website: ico.org.uk/next-step

89%

of citizens surveyed agreed that the resource is clear and easy to understand

40%

of support organisations say they can provide better support to victims as a result

90%

of organisations have reconsidered their approach to data breaches



Data breaches can cause a ripple effect that disrupts someone's life. You can make a difference...

You can make a difference...



Acknowledge what has happened

Be human in your response

Commit to making sure it doesn't happen again

You can make a difference...



Share our simplified resource with those affected:
www.ico.org.uk/next-step



Share the ripple effect campaign with your professional and internal networks: www.ico.org.uk/ripple

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- Responding as early as possible can help us to support you to resolve the issue.

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I HAD TO MOVE MY KIDS OUT OF SCHOOL.

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You can make a difference.



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[For organisations](#) / [Advice for small and medium organisations](#) / [Personal data breaches](#) /
Understanding and assessing risk in personal data breaches

Understanding and assessing risk in personal data breaches

After discovering a personal data breach, an important step we recommend is completing a risk assessment. You need to think about what personal information is involved in the breach, the number of people who will be affected and the harm may come to them as a result of the breach.



[For organisations](#) / [Report a breach](#) / [Self-assessment for data breaches](#)

Self-assessment for data breaches

A personal data breach is a breach of security leading to the accidental or unlawful disclosure of, or access to, personal data.

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