Your Personal Information and Data protection

What's it all about?

Your Personal Information and Data protection – What's it all about?

First of all, what's personal data?

Personal data is basically any piece of information that **helps someone to know who you are**, like your full name, your birthday, your email address, your phone number, or your home address. It's not only information that's **written down**, it can also be information about what you **look like** or **sound like**, for example photos or videos that you've posted online, or your voice recordings. It can even be **information about what you're interested in**, like things you search for online, or the kinds of posts you click on the most on social media.

Personal data can also be information that you might not even know is being collected about you. For example, your image might be captured on a security camera in a shopping centre or information might be collected from your phone when you log on to a public Wi-Fi network, like the Wi-Fi in shops or cafes.

So what's data protection then?

Data protection is about the **rules** that organisations have to follow and the **rights** you have when you share your personal data. There are lots of rules that organisations have to follow when they use your data in any way, from collecting it to storing it, sharing it with someone else, or getting rid of it.

You have **rights** over your personal data, such as the right to ask for a copy of your own personal data or to have it deleted. These rules and rights are called **data protection** and they apply in the real world and the online world. Children and young people have exactly the same rights as adults when it comes to their personal data.

Why do I need to know about personal data and data protection?

The General Data Protection Regulation (the **GDPR** for short) is a European law that was introduced on 25 May 2018. It is a set of data protection rules and rights that gives people in every country in the European Union more of a say about what happens to their personal data.

The GDPR says that children's personal data should be especially protected, because children might not realise that sharing personal data can sometimes be risky. Children also might not know about their data protection rights.

Who collects personal data about me?

Lots of organisations collect your personal data in real life, for example your school, your local sports club where you're a member and your doctor. They collect different information about you like how you're doing at school and your grades, or information about your health and any illnesses you might have.

Your personal data is also collected by websites, social media platforms and apps that you use. In fact, a lot of personal data that is collected about you happens online. When you use social media, you're sharing information about you and photos and

videos of yourself. When you use a route planner app on your phone, you're sharing information about your location and where you're going. When you click on ads, fill in forms or play games online, it all involves sharing personal data.

We all share countless pieces of personal data every day so **data protection law is important for all of us**. It makes sure that the organisations that collect this personal data keep it safe and use it fairly.

How do organisations use my personal data?

Organisations use your personal data for lots of different reasons. For example, a school uses your data to provide you with an education and keep track of your grades. A hospital collects your personal data to keep a record of when you've been sick and what treatments or medicine you were given. Your local sports club uses your data to tell you when training sessions and matches are taking place, or to contact your parents or guardians if you've had an accident or an injury during a game.

Online companies can also use your personal data to make their website, app or platform more relevant to what you're interested in. An example of this is when you're watching a TV show on a streaming service and it remembers what episode you're on or it tells you about a similar type of show you might be interested in.

What does the Data Protection Commission do?

One of the DPC's main jobs is to make sure that people, including children:

- know about and understand their data protection rights
- understand that sharing personal data can sometimes be risky
- know how to better protect their personal data
- know about the steps that organisations have to take to keep their personal data safe and secure.

The DPC makes sure that organisations follow the data protection rules. If organisations don't follow these rules, the DPC can order them:

- to stop collecting or using personal data,
- to give better information to people about what they're doing with their personal data,
- to delete the personal data, or
- to give a copy of the personal data to the person it belongs to.
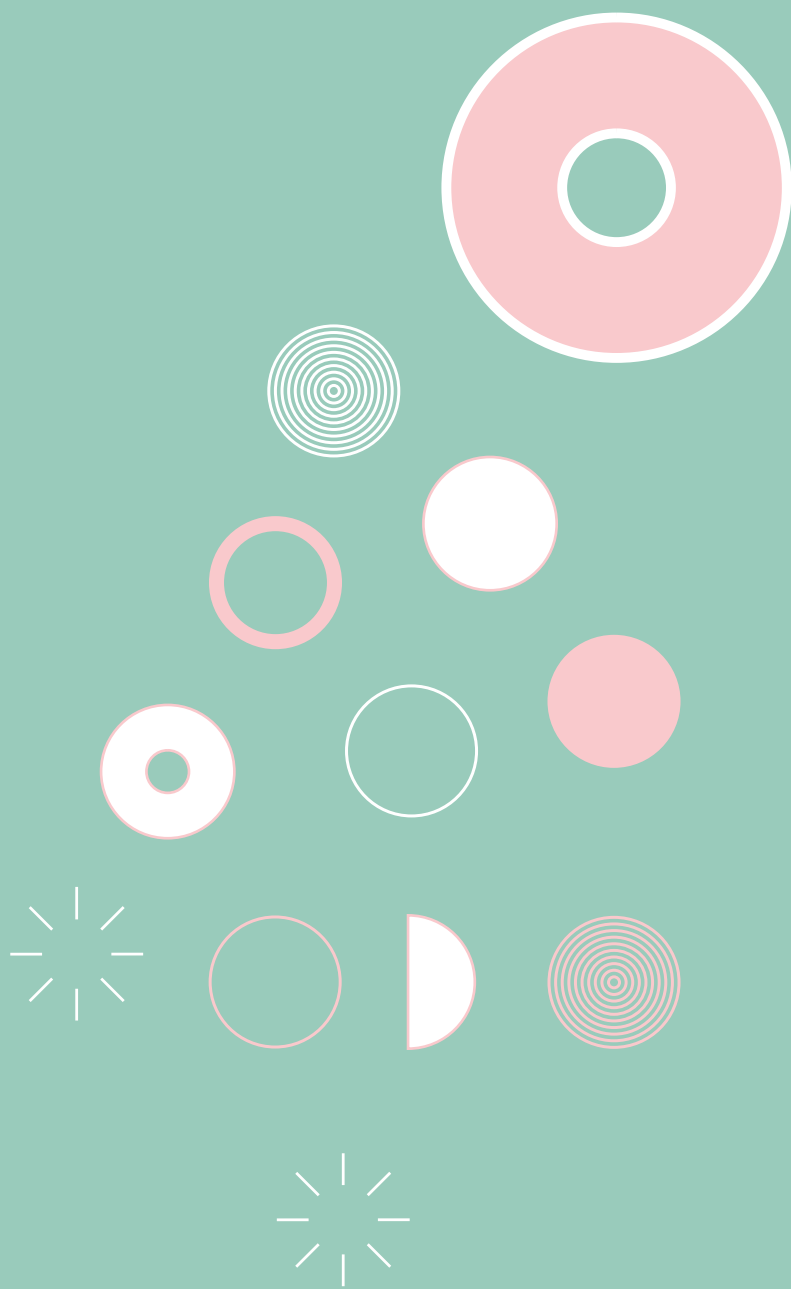
The DPC can even fine organisations which don't follow the rules.

The DPC also has other important tasks like dealing with people's complaints and investigating whether organisations are following data protection rules properly.

Get in touch

If you have any questions about protecting your personal data, you can contact the Data Protection Commission and we'll be happy to answer your questions. You can call us on **01 7650100** or **1800437 737**.

You can also contact us by post or email. For information on how to get in touch, check out our website: **https://www.dataprotection.ie/en/contact/how-contact-us**