

Data Protection Ireland

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- Payment data of Irish farmers withdrawn from public scrutiny, p.15
- Data security breach at the White House, p.16

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Civil servant slips data into hands of private eye

The Garda and the Data Protection Commissioner have been investigating the suspected sale of personal data of welfare claimants by a civil servant.

The employee in question, who is currently suspended, was working for the Department of Social Protection and was questioned after supervisors noticed he was accessing records he had no authority over. It was also discovered that the employee had been in communication with a private investigator.

The department provides unemployment benefits and social services to approximately one million

people every week. It will have to contact those welfare recipients, potentially hundreds, whose data might have been breached. It is expected that a file will be sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions shortly.

A spokeswoman for Social Protection Minister Eamon O'Cuiv confirmed the investigation, but added: "Obviously, the department would like to be in a position to provide more information in the matter, but is anxious not to disclose anything that may hinder the ongoing investigation or may in any way jeopardise actions that might be taken by the department, the Office of

the Data Protection Commissioner or the Director of Public Prosecutions."

Colin Rooney, Associate at Arthur Cox told *Data Protection Ireland*: "The Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 contain provisions to address the threat to privacy posed by unauthorised access to, and subsequent disclosure of, personal information.

"The misuse of customer personal information by staff is treated seriously by the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner and unauthorised access and disclosure of personal information may,

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Cross-border data breach for GAA

The Office of the Data Protection Commissioner is investigating a serious data breach at the Gaelic Athletic Association.

A database containing the personal data of over 500,000 members was reportedly stolen by a former employee of Servasport, a Belfast-based organisation that develops and maintains the database.

It included names, addresses, mobile and

landline numbers, email addresses and the medical conditions of some members. The Commissioner is working closely with the UK Information Commissioner's Office, the Information Commissioner's Office in Belfast and the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

All clubs have been informed of the incident and an information line is available for all members in order to discuss their concerns and to establish

whether their data have been compromised. The organisation is writing directly to those whose medical data were involved (approximately 500 people).

A spokesperson said that the Commissioner: "wishes to assure those affected that there is no evidence as yet that the data in question will be used for an illegal purpose or could be used to perpetrate identity

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