

Blog Post | GDPR and Stakeholder Engagement

25 May 2018 – the ‘end of the beginning of a very long journey for the data protection community’, as Information Commissioner Elizabeth Denham said when speaking at the International Association of Privacy Professionals Europe Data Protection Intensive 2018.

Her speech focused on the implementation of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which replaces the General Data Protection Act 1988. GDPR is a new EU law which not only represents the biggest overhaul of data protection legislation for over 25 years but will be in effect after Brexit. That means all businesses and charities will have to comply with the legislation which comes into effect later this month, and remain compliant.

Ensuring compliance from British companies and charities falls to those appointed to do so from within, and to the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) – the UK’s independent authority set up to uphold information rights in the public interest promoting openness by public bodies and data privacy for individuals.

GDPR has been on the radar for many of us for a while, and many of us are already preparing for ‘DP-Day’.

Or are we?

Beyond the walls of Results Communications, I’m involved with a number of organisations who are watching GDPR approach in a similar manner to a storm on the horizon, and some who aren’t. A common view I’ve heard is that as ‘a small member organisation’ or ‘not a Talk Talk or Cambridge Analytica or Facebook’, “they’ll not be looking at us”.

I disagree, and after attending a couple of GDPR briefings and making the ICO website my ‘most visited’, here’s why:

1. The Cambridge Analytica/Facebook allegations, revelations and discussion have forced a focus on privacy
2. The Information Commissioner Elizabeth Denham has been clear that she wants to know who holds our data and personal information and what they are doing with it
3. The ICO is increasing in numbers – recruitment is underway across its offices in Edinburgh, Cardiff, Belfast, London as well as the Wilmslow HQ; headcount is rising from 520 to a predicted 700 by 2020; the £24million budget will increase to £38million
4. Straight talk is in abundance – “data crimes are real crimes”; “tough action where necessary”; “hefty fines can and will be levied”.

But there are softer reassurances among the warnings; the ICO toolkit has more than just fines, and include sanctions, data protection audits, warnings, reprimands, enforcement notices and stop processing orders as alternative tools.

In short GDPR requires – and will deliver – more. More breach reports, more complaints, more engagement as companies and organisations seek help from the ICO to ensure they are and remain compliant, more background management of data that is gathered and processed. More, more, more...

So how are you preparing to be compliant? If it’s any consolation, I’ve booked out my Bank Holiday weekend to re-draft policies, encrypt hardware and data cleansing to ensure we are compliant.