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## Whose life is it anyway?

Ministers assure us that our personal information is safe in government databases. But how are we to know that information held on us is correct? And what means do the public have to chance incorrect information?

It is estimated that between one and five per cent of information held on public databases is incorrect, which translates into millions of details affecting millions of people. Yet FOI requests from the data protection company Garlik show most government departments have no written policy to correct such errors.

The far more worrying aspect is the sheer amount of information that is either lost or made public by accident. Here are some of the more alarming cases from the last six months.

**Four and half million** seekers personal details were stolen from Monster.co.uk recruitment website  
27 January 2009

**2,000** public servants bank details have been lost by the British Council  
25 January 2009

**5,000** patient's medical details were lost by a South Wales trust  
24 January 2009

**6,360** prisoner's details from HMP Preston were lost on a memory stick  
January 2009

**5,000** nursery-aged children's details were lost by Leeds City Council.  
8 December 2008

**80** Children's details have been lost on a misplaced memory stick owned by a Leicester City Council-run nursery. November 2008.

**7,851** children, parents and carers, details lost on a laptop stolen from Surrey County Council. November 2008.

**10,000** patient's details have been exposed by losses and thefts of IT equipment in the NHS since 2006. November 2008.

**100,000** members of the Armed Forces personal details were lost by the MoD as well as a further 600,000 potential applicant's details.  
10<sup>th</sup> October 2008

**18,000** NHS staff's personal details were lost in the post on four CDs.  
15<sup>th</sup> September 2008

**70** soldiers training details were lost.  
9<sup>th</sup> September 2008

**Thousands** of RAF personnel had their records lost when 3 portable hard drives were stolen from RAF Innsworth. September 2008.

**5,000** prison officers had their personal details exposed on a hard drive lost by a Ministry of Justice contractor. September 2009.

**608** employees of failed companies' personal details were stolen from an office at the Insolvency Service in Manchester.  
27 August 2008

**Thousands** of current and ex-prisoners sensitive details were on an unencrypted memory stick lost by a Home Office contractor. August 2008.

**400** ISA holder's details were lost when a laptop was stolen from the car of an HMRC official. In Parliamentary answers ministers reveal that 41 laptops were stolen from HMRC over the past 12 months  
August 2008.

### Other Statistics

The government has lost **53** computers during one year, along with **36** Blackberries, **30** mobile phones and four memory sticks. November 2008.

**65** memory sticks, **120** laptops and **74** hard drives were lost or stolen from the MoD between January and November. November 2008

**150** farmers mistakenly received emails from Northumbria Police containing the details of suspected criminals. November 2008

A server, purchased for **99p** on eBay, was found to connect automatically to Kirklees Council's internal network. September 2008.

**14** laptops and **21** mobile phones were lost or stolen from the Department of Health in 2007-8. November 2008.

**41** laptops were stolen from HMRC between August 2007-2008.

**176** reported data breaches in the public sector between October 2007 and October 2008.

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