

Press Release – 11 May 2015



Investigation into Apps and Websites Targeting Children

11 May 2015: The third Global Privacy Enforcement Network Privacy “Sweep” will take place between 11 May and 15 May 2015. The GPEN was established to foster cross-border cooperation among privacy authorities. This year, 26 privacy enforcement authorities from around the world, including the Data Protection Commissioner of Ireland, are participating in the Sweep.

The 2015 Sweep will involve a coordinated drive by participants to examine websites and mobile applications (apps) for issues related to children’s privacy. This theme was chosen after many privacy enforcement authorities identified children as a key area of focus given the proliferation of websites and mobile apps targeted at, or popular among, this vulnerable demographic.

We know from previous privacy sweeps that many mobile apps and websites collect a great deal of personal information. Apps and websites geared at young audiences raise privacy concerns related to the types of personal information being collected on these platforms.

Helen Dixon, Data Protection Commissioner of Ireland, said: “Websites and apps are useful and enjoyable for both children and their parents. However there is legitimate concern about the kind of data being collected by service providers via websites and apps that are popular with children, and how it is used and stored. How service providers communicate data and privacy issues to parents and children also merits investigation. My office is delighted to be taking part in this worthwhile and timely GPEN Sweep.”

As part of the initiative, Sweepers will assess whether the apps and websites examined collect personal information from children and if so, whether protective controls exist to limit that collection.

They will also assess whether the websites and apps seek parental involvement, whether they allow users to be redirected off the site, whether they make it easy to delete personal information and whether privacy communications are tailored to the age group through approaches such as simple language, large print, audio and animation.

During Sweep Week, participants will select apps and / or websites that are either targeted at or popular among young people. Participants might choose to focus on locally developed apps / websites or those from across jurisdictions. They might look specifically at games, social media or educational websites / apps, or choose to sweep a combination thereof.

The goals of the Sweep initiative include: increasing public and business awareness of privacy rights and responsibilities; encouraging compliance with privacy legislation; identifying concerns that may be addressed through targeted education and / or enforcement; and enhancing cooperation amongst privacy enforcement authorities.

Concerns identified during the Sweep may result in follow-up contact with organisations and / or enforcement action. The results of this year's Sweep will be compiled and made public this autumn.

More about the Global Privacy Enforcement Network:

<https://www.privacyenforcement.net/>

More about the Data Protection Commissioner of Ireland:

<http://www.dataprotection.ie/>

Media enquiries regarding the Data Protection Commissioner of Ireland:

media@dataprotection.ie

+353 (0)57 868 4800

About the Data Protection Commissioner of Ireland

The office of the Data Protection Commissioner of Ireland is established under the 1988 Data Protection Act. The Data Protection Amendment Act, 2003, updated the legislation, implementing the provisions of EU Directive 95/46. The Acts set out the general principle that individuals should be in a position to control how data relating to them is used.

The Data Protection Commissioner is responsible for upholding the rights of individuals as set out in the Acts, and enforcing the obligations upon data controllers. The Commissioner is appointed by Government and is independent in the exercise of his or her functions. Individuals who feel their rights are being infringed can complain to the Commissioner, who will investigate the matter, and take whatever steps may be necessary to resolve it.