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PRESS RELEASE

Data Protection Day 2023 – A focus on ‘Sharenting’

Data Protection Day is celebrated internationally every year on 28 January to commemorate the importance of privacy and data protection. To mark Data Protection Day 2023, the Information Commissioner has been involved in various initiatives.

To highlight the importance of privacy and the impact data protection may have on our daily lives, particularly in view of the interconnected online world in which we live, the Gibraltar Regulatory Authority (**the “GRA”**), as the Information Commissioner, launched a public campaign (**the “Campaign”**) to better understand and examine the prevalence of online information sharing by parents and/or guardians, a phenomenon that is termed “sharenting”.

“Sharenting” is the practice of parents and/or guardians publicising content about their child(ren) on social networking sites (**“SNS”**). When images or information about children are posted online, there is sometimes little understanding or regard to the fact that, in essence, a digital footprint is being created for the child(ren) in question. If appropriate safeguards are not in place, “sharenting” may have an impact on a child’s digital identity, privacy, and even safety.

The Campaign, titled “Data Protection in a World of Sharenting” was launched in October 2022 with the publication of an online survey targeting parents and/or guardians in Gibraltar (**the “Survey”**). The Survey consisted of 15 multiple-choice questions and was fully anonymised. The Survey was shared on the GRA’s website and social media platforms and was also disseminated to parents and/or guardians of students attending local schools by email or via supported e-learning platforms (e.g., Seesaw).

The Campaign also included the publication of a dual infographic and an awareness-raising audio-visual which highlighted the pros and cons of the sharenting phenomenon. The Campaign concludes with a report, published on Data Protection Day, which explores the extent of sharenting in Gibraltar and assesses the levels of data protection awareness amongst local parents and/or guardians (**the “Report”**).

The full Report and additional resources referred to above are available on the GRA’s website <https://www.gra.gi/data-protection/privacy-awareness/data-protection-day>

In the following, the Information Commissioner outlines some of the Survey's findings, as reflected in the Report:

- 89% of respondents used the privacy settings available to them on SNS.
- Over two thirds of respondents stated having engaged in sharenting to a certain degree, with 42% acknowledging they do so only on special occasions.
- Sharenting occurs even before a child is born, with 29% of respondents claiming they (or their partner) have shared prenatal images/information on SNS.
- 54% of respondents believe their child(ren) do not worry about their personal data being shared online.
- 69% of respondents acknowledged that the most serious, potential risk of sharenting is giving online predators information about their child(ren).

The results shows that there is scope for the Information Commissioner to expand the reach of awareness-raising initiatives and extend the provision of guidance in relation to sharenting, and more generally, the risks of disclosing personal data on SNS.

In this regard, tying into the Campaign and further looking to promote the responsible use by children of personal data, as well as the responsible sharing of children's personal data by others, January 2023 has also seen the GRA continuing its Privacy Awareness Campaign in local schools. New initiatives have also included presenting to the Young Enterprise Gibraltar participants and to members of staff at the Gibraltar Youth Service team in relation to data protection and privacy matters.

Other Data Protection Day initiatives have included attendance by the GRA's Director of Information Rights, Bradley Tosso, at the Islands Data Governance Forum in Guernsey this past week. During the event, alongside Information Commissioners from Guernsey, Jersey, Bermuda, and the Isle of Man, the GRA actively participated in panel discussions including: 'cooperation between data protection and cyber security experts'; 'how global regulations fit together'; and 'data ownership'.