

# What security measures should I be taking to protect the personal data I have on my computer?

**Some tips on how to protect personal data.**

## **Computer security:**

- Virus-checking and a firewall should be installed and active on your computer.
- Make sure that your operating system is set up to receive and install automatic updates.
- Your computer should be protected by downloading the latest patches and security updates, to help cover vulnerabilities.
- Personal information held electronically that would cause damage or distress if it were lost or stolen should be encrypted.
- Make regular back-ups of the information on your computer system and keep them in a separate safe place so that if you lose your computer, you can recover the information.
- Before disposing of old computer securely remove all personal information (by destroying the hard disk or by using disk wiping technology).
- Installing an anti-spyware tool is recommended. The generic name of spyware is given to programs that are designed to covertly monitor your computer activities and can be unwittingly installed when you are downloading other files and programs. Their use is usually malicious, can capture passwords, bank account information and credit card details, then relay them back to fraudsters. Anti-spyware helps to protect you by monitoring your computer for spyware threats, and can be free to use and update.

## **Using emails securely and responsibly:**

- Check and consider if the email content should be encrypted or be password protected.
- Be careful if when you start to type in the name of the recipient, if some similar email addresses you have used before are suggested. If you have previously emailed a number of people whose name or address starts the same way e.g. "Dave" - the auto-complete function may show up several "Daves". Make sure that you choose the correct one before you click send
- If you want to send an email to a recipient without their address being visible to all other recipients, make sure you use blind carbon copy (bcc), not carbon copy (cc). If you use cc then every recipient of your message will be able to see all of the addresses it was sent to.
- You should be very careful when using a group email address list. Look and check who is in the group and make sure you really want to send your message to everyone in the group.

## **For other security:**

- All your confidential paper waste should be shredded.
- Be very wary of people who try to trick you into divulging personal details;
- You may be prosecuted if you deliberately distribute personal details without good reason;
- A strong password should be used – Strong passwords are long (at least seven or more characters) and have a combination of upper and lower case letters, numbers and the special keyboard characters like the asterisk or currency symbols; Don't use easily guessed passwords such as names, birthdays etc.