

Dear Parent or Guardian

Data Loss, Barnet Council.

I am writing to tell you that information held by the council containing some information about children in year 11 in Barnet schools from 2007, 2008 and 2009 was stolen in a domestic burglary earlier this month.

We have examined all the data that has been taken and we believe there is a very low risk that there will be any impact on the individuals it relates to. But you gave us this information trusting that we would properly protect it and I believe it is therefore my duty to tell you what has happened, what the council has done to make sure it doesn't happen again, and to apologise for this breach in our procedures.

A member of staff was burgled recently. In that burglary computer equipment and a number of CD Roms and memory sticks were stolen along with other items from the house. The council has policies and processes in place to make sure that information that could be taken in such circumstances remains confidential.

The computer equipment was encrypted in line with council policies, so cannot be used to access confidential information. But this was not the case with the CDs or memory sticks. This was a clear breach of our policies and the member of staff concerned has been suspended.

The data stored in the CD Roms and memory sticks included your child's name and information about their educational attainment, entitlement to free school meals and postcode. In a few instances the information stored was more extensive and the parents and guardians of the children where this was the case have been informed separately.

We believe the risks attached to this data breach are minimal and the council has taken steps to minimise risks still further. But we have established a helpline so that you can discuss any concerns you may have and ask for advice. The number is 020 8359 7599. If you ring please quote 2903c. More information is also available on the website at www.barnet.gov.uk.

I have taken several steps to ensure that this breach of confidentiality cannot happen again. Since the theft we have:

- carried out a full risk assessment on the information on the stolen CDs.
- made software changes to prevent staff saving any data onto unsecure memory devices (including CD Roms)
- confirmed that every council computer used by staff outside of the office is securely encrypted
- ordered a full independent enquiry into how this incident came to take place and how the council protects confidential information. This enquiry will report directly to me.

The council works to help and support children and young people every day and we take these duties extremely seriously. I am very sorry that we have, on this occasion, failed to meet our own high standards and have, as a result, let you down.

Yours faithfully

Nick Walkley
Chief Executive, Barnet Council