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Freedom of Information Team

March 2011

REFERENCE: FOI – 12/39

I write in regards to your request for the release of the following information:

Please provide full details of:

- a) **the one case of data loss, and**
- b) **two breaches of confidentiality**

that occurred in 2011 within the department, including a full summary of what happened, the nature of the data, and measures taken in the aftermath.

These are the incidents referenced in the written answer from the Secretary of State to David Davis MP on February 20.

Your request has been handled as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act and we are now able to provide you with a substantive response to your request.

The single case of data loss (which is also one of the two breaches of confidentiality cases) concerned a burglary from the Electoral Office Northern Ireland (EONI) in their Belfast Area Electoral Office on Friday 18 March 2011. An encrypted laptop and a small number of personal identity documents, confirming the identity of persons applying to be added to the Electoral Register, were taken. There was no data held on the encrypted laptop. Some of the identify documents were recovered by Police near the scene. Following this incident a number of changes to strengthen security arrangements and information assurance were undertaken by the Electoral Office. This incident was reported to the Information Commissioner's Office which was satisfied that there was no breach of the seven key data protection principles.

The other breach of confidentiality occurred on the 5 April 2011 when a letter sent between the EONI Belfast Office and its Omagh Office was opened and resealed by the Royal Mail - this is thought to have been as a result of the envelope being caught in sorting machinery. A complaint was lodged with the Royal Mail and the PSNI was informed. There is no evidence that any loss of information occurred.