The Freedom of Information Publication Scheme

The Information Commissioner updated its model publication scheme in 2014.

As well as responding to requests for information, you must publish information proactively. The Freedom of Information Act requires every public authority to have a publication scheme, approved by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), and to publish information covered by the scheme.

The scheme must set out your commitment to make certain classes of information routinely available, such as policies and procedures, minutes of meetings, annual reports and financial information.

To help you do this the ICO has developed a model publication scheme. The information you release in accordance with the publication scheme represents the minimum you must disclose. If a member of the public wants information not listed in the scheme, they can still ask you for it. Most public authorities will make their publication scheme available on their website under 'freedom of information', 'guide to information' or 'publication scheme'.

Any publication scheme you have that was created before 1 January 2009 is now out of date and you should replace it with the ICO model scheme issued in 2014.

What is the model publication scheme? The model publication scheme consists of seven commitments and seven classes of information. The model publication scheme commits you to publish certain classes of information. It also specifies how you should make the information available, what you can charge, and what you need to tell members of the public about the scheme.

- ✓ To review and update on a regular basis the information the authority makes available under this scheme.
- ✓ To produce a schedule of any fees charged for access to information which is made proactively available.
- ✓ To make this publication scheme available to the public.

Classes of information

Who we are and what we do.
Organisational information, locations and contacts, constitutional and legal governance.

What we spend and how we spend it.
Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, tendering, procurement and contracts.

What our priorities are and how we are doing.
Strategy and performance information, plans, assessments, inspections and reviews.

How we make decisions.
Policy proposals and decisions. Decision making processes, internal criteria and procedures, consultations.

Our policies and procedures.
Current written protocols for delivering our functions and responsibilities.

Lists and Registers.
Information held in registers required by law and other lists and registers relating to the functions of the authority.

The Services we Offer.
Advice and guidance, booklets and leaflets, transactions and media releases. A description of the services offered.

The classes of information will not generally include:

- Information the disclosure of which is prevented by law, or exempt under the Freedom of Information Act, or is otherwise properly considered to be protected from disclosure.
- Information in draft form.
- Information that is no longer readily available as it is contained in files that have been placed in archive storage, or is difficult to access for similar reasons.

The method by which information published under this scheme will be made available
The authority will indicate clearly to the public what information is covered by this scheme and how it can be obtained.
Where it is within the capability of a public authority, information will be provided on a website. Where it is impracticable to make information available on a website or when an individual does not wish to access the information by the website, a public authority will indicate how information can be obtained by other means and provide it by those means. In exceptional circumstances some information may be available only by viewing in person. Where this manner is specified, contact details will be provided. An appointment to view the information will be arranged within a reasonable timescale.

Where an authority is legally required to translate any information, it will do so. Obligations under disability and discrimination legislation and any other legislation to provide information in other forms and formats will be adhered to when providing information in accordance with this scheme.

Charges which may be made for Information published under this scheme
The purpose of this scheme is to make the maximum amount of information readily available at minimum inconvenience and cost to the public. Charges made by the authority for routinely published material will be justified and transparent and kept to a minimum.

Material which is published and accessed on a website will be provided free of charge.
Charges may be made for information subject to a charging regime specified by Parliament.
Charges may be made for actual disbursements incurred such as:

- ✓ photocopying
- ✓ postage and packaging
- ✓ the costs directly incurred as a result of viewing information

Written Requests
Information held by a public authority that is not published under this scheme can be requested in writing, when its provision will be considered in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.

The Act covers all recorded information held by a public authority. It is not limited to official documents and it covers, for example, drafts, emails, notes, recordings of telephone conversations and CCTV recordings.