

Housing
Executive

The Freedom of
Information Act

Your right to know



What is the Freedom of Information Act?

The Freedom of Information Act came into force on 1 January 2005. The Act seeks to promote a culture of openness within public administration and aims to balance three rights:

- The right to information
- The right to confidentiality
- The right to effective public administration

The underlying principle of the Act is that all information held by a public authority should be freely available, apart from a number of exempt items.

The Act places two main obligations upon public authorities:

1. To adopt and maintain a publication scheme. The Housing Executive's Publication Scheme is available to view on our website at www.nihe.gov.uk or by written request from Freedom of Information, Information Governance Team or email: foi@nihe.gov.uk.
2. To comply with requests for information. From 1 January 2005, each public authority must comply with requests for the information that it holds, unless an exemption from disclosure applies



What rights do I have in relation to the Act?

The Freedom of Information Act gives everyone two specific separate rights:

- The right to know whether information exists.
- The right to ask for access to information.

Public authorities normally have a maximum of twenty working days to respond to the request. However, there are circumstances when this time limit can be extended.

The Act defines information as 'information recorded in any form', this includes:

- Any paper or electronic documentation; and
- Information held by public authorities regardless of when that information was created or how long it has been held by the public authority.

How can a request for information be made?

Requests under the Freedom of Information Act must be made in writing (including e-mail) and you will need to provide:

- Your name and address for correspondence
- Sufficient detail to enable staff to locate the information.

What response should be provided to my request for information?

Subject to exemption:

- We must advise you whether we hold the information you have requested
- If we do, we must supply this information within 20 working days from receipt of the request
- If the Housing Executive refuses to disclose any or all of the information requested, we must tell you the exemption relied upon and why the exemption was applied.





Fees and charges

You will be advised of any charges that may be made for processing your request. These charges will be determined in accordance with the Fees Regulations under the Act.

Please forward your request to:

Freedom of Information
Information Governance Team
Planning, Performance Risk & Governance
Northern Ireland Housing Executive
The Housing Centre
2 Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT2 8PB

Email: foi@nihe.gov.uk



Can I have the decision reviewed?

Yes, the Housing Executive has an internal review procedure and if you are dissatisfied with the decision in response to your request you can ask to have the decision reviewed. A request for an internal review must be made within two months of the original FOI decision being issued. A senior officer who is independent of the original decision will carry out the review by considering all of the information requested. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the internal review procedure you may raise your complaint with the Information Commissioner (contact details below).

Disclaimer

This leaflet offers basic guidance on your rights under the Freedom of Information Act and is not intended to provide an authoritative interpretation of the law relating to Freedom of Information.

For further information on the Freedom of Information Act you should contact the Citizens Advice Bureau, a solicitor or the Office of the Information Commissioner.



Useful contacts

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF
Tel: 0303 123 1113
Web: www.ico.org.uk

Information Commissioner's Office (Northern Ireland)
3rd Floor, 14 Cromac Place, Belfast BT7 2JB
Tel: (028) 9027 8757
Email: ni@ico.org.uk

Freedom of Information Act 2000 Request for access to information

To request information please complete this form using block capitals and return it to the Freedom of Information, Information Governance Team (address overleaf).

Your details

Name	
Address	
	Postcode
Tel	
Email	

I request the following information:

Please provide as much detail as possible to allow us to locate the information. We will get in touch if we need more information to find the records. Continue on a separate page if necessary.

My preferred form of access is:

- To receive copies of the information
- To inspect the information
- In another format as agreed with us

If "other", please specify: