

## What is the Freedom of Information Act?

The Freedom of Information Act came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> 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 2 main obligations upon public authorities:

1. To adopt and maintain a publication scheme.  
The Housing Executive's publication scheme is available for download from our website at [www.nihe.gov.uk](http://www.nihe.gov.uk) or by written request from the Access to Information Manager.
2. To comply with requests for information.  
From 1<sup>st</sup> 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.



## 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 Access to Information Manager (address overleaf).

### Your details

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

### 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 record(s)

To inspect the record(s)

In another format as agreed with us

If "other", please specify:

\_\_\_\_\_

## Fees & 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:**

Access to Information Manager,  
6th Floor,  
Housing Centre,  
Northern Ireland Housing Executive,  
2 Adelaide Street, Belfast BT2 8PB  
Telephone 03448 920 900  
e-mail: records@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 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 (address and telephone number 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  
Telephone: 0303 123 1113  
[www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk)

Information Commissioner's Office  
(Northern Ireland)  
51 Adelaide Street,  
Belfast BT2 8FE  
Telephone: 028 9026 9388

[www.nihe.gov.uk](http://www.nihe.gov.uk)  
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# The Freedom of Information Act



## Your right to know



**Housing** Executive