



Information Commissioner's Office  
Promoting public access to official information  
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## Freedom of Information Act

### Model publication scheme: What you need to do

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) provides rights of public access to information held by public authorities. This is part of a series of guidance notes produced to help public authorities understand their obligations and to promote good practice.

This guidance is a basic introduction to the model publication scheme which was introduced on 1 January 2009. It is a basic guide for public authorities on how to operate this scheme.

#### The model publication scheme

The FOIA requires every public authority to adopt and maintain a publication scheme which has been approved by the Information Commissioner, and to publish information in accordance with the scheme.

There is now **one approved model scheme** which needs to be adopted by all authorities. The scheme lists information under seven broad classes. Each authority then needs to prepare a **guide to information** for the public, which gives details of what the authority will provide under the scheme.

Authorities established after 1 November 2008 will have 60 days to comply from the date they are created. Bodies which are merging should already have adopted the scheme but will need to produce a new guide to information for the merged body.

#### 1. Adopt the model scheme

- The model scheme is the only scheme approved by the ICO. It should be adopted by all public authorities.
- The model scheme should not be altered or amended.
- There is no need to inform the ICO that you are adopting the scheme.

#### 2. Identify the information you should make available

- The ICO has already identified the specific information which parish councils/meetings, schools, GP's, pharmacists, dentists, and opticians should publish. This is shown in the template guide to information for each of these sectors.
- Determine how much of this information you hold. The FOIA does not require you to create information if you do not already hold it.
- For other authorities, use the definition document for your sector. Determine what information you hold and should make available under each class heading. There is guidance on [using the definition documents](#).
- Decide how you will make the information available, and whether you will make any charges.

### **3. Produce a guide to information**

- Parish and community councils, parish meetings, individual NHS practitioners, primary schools and nurseries should fill in the template guide to information for the appropriate sector using the guidance provided. There is no need to notify the ICO that you have done this.
- Other authorities should make sure members of the public can easily find out what information they make available, how to access it, and whether there will be any fee.
- There is no specific requirement as to how they do this. Many may find that their existing website provides a comprehensive and user-friendly guide to information. Others may choose to produce a list of documents or categories of document.
- There is no need to structure your website or guide according to the seven classes.

### **4. Make sure the information will be made available**

Review your procedures for making information routinely available.

- Where possible, any of the information which is not already online should be loaded on to your website.
- Determine who will be responsible for providing information which is not available on the website. Contact details should be displayed online.
- Authorities who do not use websites should publicise contact details for obtaining information, for example on a public notice board.
- If some information can only be accessed by visiting authority premises, policies and procedures should be in place for this.
- You should make sure all relevant staff know what information they should routinely make available if asked.

### **5. Agree procedures for maintaining and reviewing your guide**

You will need to regularly review the information being published.

- Outdated information should be amended or replaced.
- As information is created, it should be considered for publication according to the guide to information.
- The guide to information should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it still reflects the work of the authority and does not wrongly omit information.

### **6. Publicise the scheme**

If you have a website, the model scheme and guide to information (which may be the website itself) should be available on-line and easy to find. Otherwise, make sure they are publicised in another way, for example by announcing the new scheme in a newsletter or on a public notice board.

#### **More information**

If you need any more information about this or any other aspect of freedom of information, please contact us.

Phone: 08456 30 60 60 or 01625 54 57 45

Email: please use the online [enquiry form](#) on our website

Website: [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk)