

What is the Freedom of Information Act?

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) gives you the right to access recorded information held by public sector organisations. Anyone can request information – there are no restrictions on your age, nationality or where you live.

The FOI Act operates alongside the Environmental Information Regulations and data protection legislation such as GDPR. The data protection legislation allows people to access information about themselves (for example personnel records, or information held by credit reference agencies). The Environmental Information Regulations give people access to information about the environment.

How do I ask for information? For your request to be dealt with according to the Freedom of Information Act, you must:

- Contact the Council directly;
- Make the request in writing, for example in a letter or an email. You can make a verbal or written request for environmental information;
- Give your real name; and
- Give an address to which the authority can reply. This can be a postal or email address.

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is an independent body that enforces the Freedom of Information Act, the current data protection legislation and the Environmental Information Regulations, and has produced some guidance on what to consider before making your request.

What type of information can I ask to have? You can ask to have any recorded information. This could be in the form of e-mails, notebooks, videos or tapes. A lot of information is already on our website and our guide to our publication scheme explains this.

When will I receive the information? In most cases we'll aim to respond to your request within 20 working days of receiving it, and if we can't we'll explain why and let you know when you'll receive a reply.

Can my request be declined? We'll provide you with the information unless there's a good reason for not doing so - for example if your request relates to the personal details of another person. If we decline your request, we'll let you know why we made this decision. If you don't agree, you can ask us to reconsider our decision. If the request is still declined you can ask the Information Commissioner's Office to review the decision.

What format can I request information to be in? You can request that your information is supplied in any format (for example paper or electronically), although there may be a charge for some formats.

How much will it cost to make a request? A lot of information may be supplied free of charge. However, sometimes you may have to pay a fee, either to cover administration costs or to pay photocopying or postage costs, or because of the expense involved in finding and supplying the information.

Details of our fees can be found in our [guide to our publication scheme](#).