

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

The Freedom of Information Act creates a right of access to recorded information and obliges a public authority to:

- Have a publication scheme in place
- Allow public access to information held by public authorities.

The Act covers any recorded organisational information such as reports, policies or strategies, that is held by a public authority in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and by UK-wide public authorities based in Scotland, however it does not cover personal information such as patient records which are covered by the Data Protection Act.

Public authorities include government departments, local authorities, the NHS, state schools and police forces.

The Act is enforced by the Information Commissioner who regulates both the Freedom of Information Act and the Data Protection Act.

The Surgery publication scheme

A publication scheme requires an authority to make information available to the public as part of its normal business activities. The scheme lists information under seven broad classes, which are:

- who we are and what we do
- what we spend and how we spend it
- what our priorities are and how we are doing it
- how we make decisions
- our policies and procedures
- lists and registers
- the services we offer

Who can request information?

Under the Act, any individual, anywhere in the world, is able to make a request to a practice for information. An applicant is entitled to be informed in writing, by the practice, whether the practice holds information of the description specified in the request and if that is the case, have the information communicated to him. An individual can request information, regardless of whether he/she is the subject of the information or affected by its use.

How should requests be made?

Requests must:

- be made in writing (this can be electronically e.g. email/fax)
- state the name of the applicant and an address for correspondence
- describe the information requested.

What cannot be requested?

Personal data about staff and patients covered under Data Protection Act.

For more information see these websites:

- [Legislation GOV.UK](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)
- [Information Commissioners](https://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk)