



## The Freedom of Information Act 2000

### FOI FACT SHEET

**Note:** This leaflet gives an overview of some of the main provisions of the Act and should not be regarded as a legal interpretation.

**1. What is the Freedom of Information Act?** The Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000 gives you the right to request information from public authorities. From the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2005, you will have access to information on how the Council works, spends public money, and reaches decisions.

**2. Information may also be obtained under:**

- **The Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA)**- this allows access to information held about you by both public and private organisations, and the ability to make sure it's correct.
- **The Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs)**- This Act gives you access to any environmental information held by organisations that perform public functions.

**3. How do I get information about The Consumer Council under the FOI Act?** You can find information on the Council's website [<http://www.gccni.gov.uk>]. If you can't see what you're looking for you can email [info@gccnii.gov.uk](mailto:info@gccnii.gov.uk), or write to:

The Consumer Council  
Elizabeth House  
116 Hollywood Road  
Belfast  
BT4 1NY

Please state your name, address, telephone number and specific details of the information you require.

**4. How long does it take to get information?** Once a written request for information is received, we will respond promptly, and at any rate, within 20 working days. This time can be extended where we are obliged to consider the public interest.

**5. Is there a cost?** This depends on a number of factors including the volume and complexity of material requested. Responses to enquiries that cost the department less than £450 to process<sup>1</sup> will be provided free of charge, although there may be a charge for disbursements<sup>2</sup>. The Council has a right to refuse a request if the costs of locating and retrieving the information exceed £450. In all cases, we will notify you of any estimated costs before proceeding with the request.

**6. What happens if the information I want is not available?** The Council cannot provide information that does not exist, but we have a duty to assist you. We will contact you with what relevant information we do hold, or may suggest another public authority that might help.

**7. Can I have any information at all?** The FOI Act allows you access to almost all information that a public body holds. But some information cannot be revealed to the public, like information about national security, law enforcement, commercially sensitive information or personal information about others.

**8. What if I am refused information?** We will tell you if information is being withheld and why. If you are unhappy with our decision or unsatisfied with the response, you have the right to request an internal review or make a complaint.

**9. What can I complain about?** You can complain that you have been refused access to information. You can also complain about how we handled your request, for instance:

- Failure to respond to your request within 20 working days (or failure to explain why an extension to the 20 days is needed)
- Failure to give you proper advice and help
- Failure to give the information in the form in which you asked for it
- Failure to properly explain any reasons for refusing your requests

If you have a complaint about how your request has been handled or you are unsatisfied with the response, write to the Director, Energy and Corporate Services at:

The Consumer Council  
Elizabeth House  
116 Holywood Road  
Belfast  
BT4 1NY  
(Tel: 028 90672488;  
Fax: 028 90657701)

---

<sup>1</sup> Includes the cost of finding, sorting or editing the material

<sup>2</sup> Disbursements may include costs of photocopying, printing, postage etc

Your complaint will be acknowledged within 2 days and we will respond within 20 working days.

After a full investigation, we will give you an explanation and, where a mistake has been made, offer our apologies and put matters right.

If after receiving our response you are still dissatisfied, you may complain to the Chief Executive at the same address, who will make a further investigation and reply within 20 working days.

If you remain dissatisfied, you can seek an independent review from the Information Commissioner.

Requests for a review by the Information Commissioner can be made in writing directly to:

The Information Commissioner,  
Wycliffe House Water Lane,  
Wilmslow,  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF  
(Tel: 01625 545 700;  
Fax: 01625 524 510).

**9. How do I find out more?** More information is available from office of the Information Commissioner at:

**Website:** [www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk)  
**Phone:** 01625 545 700  
**Fax:** 01625 524 510  
**Email:** [ico.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ico.gsi.gov.uk)  
**Post:** Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF

**Note...**

The supply of information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) does not give the recipient the automatic right to re-use it in any way that would infringe copyright. This includes, for example, making multiple copies, publishing and issuing copies to the public. Permission to re-use the information must be obtained in advance from The Consumer Council. For further details on how to apply for a licence please see: <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/click-use/index.htm>