

**West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Authority**  
**Freedom of Information Act 2000**  
**Guidance for Stations/departments**

1. REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION IN THE PUBLICATION SCHEME
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## **1. REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION IN THE PUBLICATION SCHEME**

- 1.1 The introduction of West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Authority's publication scheme should not change the Authority's existing arrangements for providing information to the public and to stakeholders. Stations/departments regularly providing information now covered by the scheme (e.g. fire safety advice) should continue to provide information in the way they have done in the past following normal working practices. Stations/departments may wish to explain to the public that the information being requested by them is now covered by the publication scheme and provide details of how to access the scheme. This may help stations/departments deal with requests for information and lead to a reduction in the time spent dealing with them. In time, almost all of the information available in the publication scheme will be available on the Authority's web site and staff should direct the public there if practical.
- 1.2 The publication scheme provides the contact details of the Corporate Services Information Team. It is expected that the Corporate Services Information Team will initially receive the majority of enquiries arising from the publication scheme directly.
- 1.3 Should stations/departments receive requests for information in the publication scheme where the publication scheme or Freedom of Information is mentioned, stations/departments can pass the request to the Corporate Services Information Team ([information@westyorksfire.gov.uk](mailto:information@westyorksfire.gov.uk)) to co-ordinate a response. Requests for information in the scheme must be dealt with promptly and should be passed to the Corporate Services Information Team immediately in order to meet the deadline for provision of information (twenty working days).
- 1.4 In some circumstances, during meetings with stakeholders/public for example, it may be more appropriate for requests for information in the scheme to be handled by stations/departments directly. This may be particularly relevant during the provision of fire safety advice to the public. Requests for fire safety advice, whether covered by the scheme or not, should be dealt with in the normal way by relevant stations/departments. If the request mentions the publication scheme, staff should notify the Corporate Services Information Team with the details so that it can be logged.
- 1.5 The Corporate Services Information Team will provide information covered by the scheme within twenty working days from receipt of the request. Information will be taken from various locations as follows:

- Authority internet/intranet web pages and documents will be emailed or printed out and posted as requested.
- Information, which is not available via the intranet or internet (e.g. information held by stations/departments only) will be requested from stations/departments. Stations/departments should provide this information to the Corporate Services Information Team within ten working days.
- Public inspection of information - The Corporate Services Information Team will make the necessary arrangements for public inspection of information.

1.6 Members of the public can inspect information covered by the scheme at FSHQ by making an appointment with the Information Manager or by making an appointment with the department holding the information (via the Corporate Services Information Team).

1.7 A computer will be made available, for use by members of the public wishing to access the scheme directly. This is on an appointment only basis with the Information Manager.

1.8 Managers need to make sure their staff are aware that they must not refuse access to information covered by the scheme and must deal with requests for information promptly.

## **2. REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION NOT IN THE PUBLICATION SCHEME**

2.1 When staff receive requests for information not in the scheme and the information is something that is normally provided, stations/departments should continue to provide the information requested following their normal working practices. Stations/departments should notify the Corporate Services Information Team of any regular requests for information not covered by the publication scheme but normally provided so that a new class of information can be added to the scheme.

2.2 The publication scheme provides the contact details of the Corporate Services Information Team for requests for information not in the scheme. It is expected that the Corporate Services Information Team will receive the majority of requests for information not in the scheme, which arise from the publication scheme.

2.3 When requests for information not in the scheme are received by stations/departments and the information is something that is not normally provided, stations/departments should pass on the request to the Corporate Services Information Team. The request for information will then go through the procedure outlined below.

Any requests that are ignored or refused without consideration may be in breach (from 2005) in breach of the Act.

- 2.4 Upon receipt of a request for information, the Corporate Services Information Team will send a standard email to the head of department(s) who may be holding the information. The decision to provide information not in the publication scheme will rest at head of department level and a standard form will need to be completed.

Stations/departments will be required to:

- State whether the information exists.
- State whether the information can be provided.

- 2.5 Where a decision is made not to provide the information, stations/departments will be asked to provide reasons for refusal using the exemptions under the Freedom of Information Act together with details of how the public interest was considered (see Freedom of Information Act - overview and guidance).

- 2.6 Where requests for information can be met, stations/departments will be required to provide the information to the Corporate Services Information Team within ten working days.

- 2.7 The Corporate Services Information Team will write to the person requesting information either enclosing the information or explaining the reasons for refusal.

- 2.8 In some circumstances, where the nature of the request requires specialist knowledge for example, it may be more appropriate for a department to deal with the information request directly. In these circumstances the Corporate Services Information Team will liaise with stations/departments and agree the best way forward.

### **3. MONITORING REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The Authority needs to understand whether the Freedom of Information Act has an impact on the volume of requests for information and the resources required to respond to them. Monitoring procedures in place will capture website hits and requests arising from direct contact with the Corporate Services Information Team (where most requests for information arising from the scheme will be handled).

- 3.2 The Corporate Services Information Team will keep a log of the requests they receive directly from the public or passed to them by stations/departments. The log will detail all requests for information, whether covered by the scheme or not. The log will monitor the provision of information and be used to develop the scheme. It will also ensure that there is consistency in the decisions made to provide information not covered by the scheme.

3.3 The log will not cover information requests handled by stations/departments in the course of their day-to-day work. It is for managers to determine whether or not they want to record these requests in order to judge any reduction or growth in volume.

#### **4. KEEPING INFORMATION UP TO DATE AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

4.1 In order to respond to requests for information, whether covered by the scheme or not, it is essential for directorates and stations/departments to exercise good records management practices so that up to date information can be easily located and delivered.

4.2 Staff take information from the website, the intranet and from stations/departments directly so it is important to keep information up to date in all of the sources where it is stored. As 'information' covers information held on computers, in databases, in hard copy and in visual formats it is important to make sure that records management practices cover both electronic and manual files.

4.3 Stations/departments are responsible for the information contained on the Authority's website and intranet relating to the functions or services they deliver. Stations/departments need to have processes in place for keeping web pages (and any documents stored on them) up to date. Changes to the website should be notified to the Corporate Services Information Team so that the impact on the publication scheme can be considered.

4.4 There is an onus on everyone producing documents to bear in mind the impact it might have on the publication scheme e.g. whether a class should be added, amended, updated or whether permission to remove a class of information needs to be sought from the Information Commissioner. Any queries about information covered by the publication scheme (now or in the future) can be dealt with by contacting the Corporate Services Information Team.

#### **5. AIDE MEMOIRE**

- Requests for information normally provided (Fire safety advice, incident information to local media etc) should be provide in the normal way.
- If the Publication Scheme is mentioned, refer the request to CSIT.
- Requests for information not normally provided (personal, confidential, sensitive etc) should be referred to CSIT.
- Refer the public to the Authority web site where practical.