



Policy Name	Freedom of Information Policy
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Created By	Head of Policies
Amended By	J. Townsend
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1. Purpose

Heart & Soul Community Training is committed to the highest standard of teaching and learning, across a full range of vocational activities. The Centre has a long tradition of education and training at a local and national programmes in addition to small-scale urban regeneration projects.

This paper describes the ways in which the Centre is complying with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (hereafter referred to as the FOIA). This includes how staff, students and members of the public can exercise their rights, and the responsibilities of the Centre and its members, under the FOIA.

The FOIA establishes a “general right of access to all types of recorded information held by public authorities” and operates in conjunction with the Data Protection Act (DPA) 1998 and the Environmental Information Regulations Act 2004, with oversight of all three resting with the Information Commissioner.

This legislation and regulation promote a “culture of openness” and accountability, alongside protecting privacy rights, across the public sector. As such they encourage proactive publication of information and on-going development of good records management, as well as governing access to information held by public authorities.

Compliance with the legislation includes adoption of a “Publication Scheme”, described below, as well as ensuring information requests are handled appropriately according to the relevant legislation. It also requires the Centre to manage information and records appropriately, as addressed by other policies.

2. Policy

2.1. The Publication Scheme

The initial requirement of the FOIA is adoption of a “Publication Scheme”. The Centre’s updated Publication Scheme will soon be available on the Centre intranet; in the meantime hard copies are available from the Learning Resource Centre.



2.2. What is a “Publication Scheme”?

A Publication Scheme is a document which describes the information a public authority publishes, or intends to publish. In this context, ‘publish’ means to make information available, routinely. These descriptions are called ‘classes of information’. The scheme is not a list of the actual publications, because this will change as new material is published or existing material revised. It is, however, the Centre’s commitment to make available the information described.

The Publication Scheme sets out the classes, or categories, of information published. It also makes clear how the information described can be accessed and whether or not charges will be made.

This model is designed for Centres across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The purpose of the

Model is to save institutions duplicating effort in producing individual schemes and to assist the public in accessing information from across the sector. However, to reflect the diversity in size and function of the institution, a number of optional classes of information are included. As a result, models within the sector will vary slightly. Any optional classes relevant to Heart & Soul Community Training have been included in our scheme.

The Centre is legally committed to publishing according to the scheme, and to developing (and so extending the information covered by) the scheme. As well as complying with the FOIA, this should be of benefit to the Centre, since it should enable easier location and access to the Centre’s information - for members of the Centre as well as members of the public.

The Data Protection Department will administer continued development of the Centre’s Publication Scheme to provide navigation to as much available Centre information as possible. Those producing [non-ephemeral] Centre information, for which there is no reason to retain confidentiality, should ensure their output is referred to the Data Protection Department for appropriate inclusion in the Publication Scheme.

2.3. Accessing information covered by the Publication Scheme

The scheme describes classes of information we publish. Next to each class we have indicated the manner in which the information described will be available, including links to web information and contacts to access other formats. We have also indicated whether charges apply to material in each class.

To request information available through our publication scheme, use the form provided below.

It is important that the scheme meets the needs of information seekers - both internal and external to the Centre, as well as meeting legal compliance. Consequently, feedback is crucial.

If you find the scheme difficult to understand or to access in its existing format, please let us know. We also welcome suggestions as to how our scheme might be improved. Any questions, comments or complaints about this scheme should be sent in writing to the contact details below.

2.4. Requests for information not covered by the Publication Scheme

Given “the natural place of a Centre as an open information provider”, we are used to receiving and responding to enquiries for information. In most cases, we will follow our usual practice of fulfilling requests made to the relevant department holding the information. We will also continue development of the Centre’s Publication Scheme to provide navigation to as much available Centre information as possible.



Under the FOIA, you have the right to request any information held by the Centre which it has not already made available through its Publication Scheme. Enquiries should be made to:

Jayne Townsend Heart & Soul Community CIC 5th Avenue Low Hill Wolverhampton WV10 9TB

2.5. Making and Receiving Requests

Requests do not have to mention FOIA but have to be made in writing using the Request for Information Form (included at the end of this document).

This means any enquiry requesting information not included in our Publication Scheme is essentially a request under FOIA. As such, the Centre is obliged to provide the information within 20 working days. We may charge a fee. We will not be required to release information to which an exemption in the Act legitimately applies. However, we may be required to explain to the applicant why we are not releasing information and we may also have to justify this to the Information Commissioner.

Where information is known, and open, it should be provided directly, especially where a school or department is familiar with providing such information. However, if information is not readily available, or where there is the potential of applying FOIA exemptions and not providing all the requested information, the request should be assessed to see whether FOIA is the appropriate legislation to govern release of the information, calculate the costs of retrieving information, co-ordinate retrieval and the application of any appropriate exemptions, and assist with any redaction. It will also administer logging details of referred requests and communication with the applicant, including any appeals or complaints. In handling referred requests, staff will work with the applicant, appropriate schools, departments and Centre officers.

2.6. Costs for Information Requests

In most cases we will endeavour to provide information electronically and will not charge. In cases where it is more appropriate to provide information in other formats, we may charge to cover disbursement costs such as printing and postage.

If the costs of obtaining information exceed reasonable limits (as set by the Fees Regulations, currently £450 or about 2.5 days of staff time¹), we will refer to the applicant and attempt to refine the request so as to reduce the potential retrieval costs. Where this is not possible, we may refuse to meet the request, or we may pass on the costs to the applicant. In this instance, we will issue a bill, based on our estimate of the retrieval costs, and will undertake retrieval after payment of the amount.

2.7. Complaints

In the case of a complaint, in the first instance details should be reported in writing to the Centre Information Officer's address:

Jayne Townsend Heart & Soul Community CIC 5th Avenue Low Hill Wolverhampton WV10 9TB

¹ These cover the specific costs ceiling for requests. This is an important exemption to the general right stated earlier in the Policy but please be aware that there are draft regulations that have recently been put forward by the Government that may change this ceiling in the future.



If the matter cannot be resolved by the Officer, the complaint will be referred to a Complaints Panel.

If we are unable to resolve any complaint, you can complain to the Information

Commissioner, the independent body who oversees the Freedom of Information Act 2000:

Information Commissioner

Wycliffe House

Water Lane

Wilmslow

Cheshire

SK9 5AF

2.8. Further information

More information about the Freedom of Information Act 2000 is available on the Information Commissioner's website at:

<http://www.ico.gov.uk/>