

What is the Freedom of Information Act?

The Freedom of Information (FoI) Act entitles anybody to ask a public authority in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, including Government Departments and NHS Trusts, for any recorded information that they keep. A list of organisations covered by the Act is available at www.foi.gov.uk/coverage.htm.

The Act gives the public greater access to information about how decisions are taken in government and how public services are developed and delivered.

The FoIA operates alongside the Data Protection Act, which allows people to access information about themselves.

How do I ask for information?

All requests for information must be made in writing (eg letter, fax, e-mail). You must clearly state what information you are requesting and supply your name and address. You do not need to say why you want the information. You should send this to the Information Governance Manager at our Trust Headquarters by one of the following means:



Post: South Western Ambulance Service
NHS Trust
Unit 3, Abbey Court
Eagle Way
Sowton Industrial Estate
Exeter
Devon
EX2 7HY

Fax: 01392 261510
e-mail: xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxx.xxx.xx

All public authorities covered by the Freedom of Information Act are also required to have a Publication Scheme. This is available upon request or from our website at www.swast.nhs.uk. The scheme lists the information which we will routinely make available, how you can obtain it and states whether you have to pay for that information. Check this to see whether the information you want is listed and whether it is available by any other means than submitting a written request. A lot of information is published on our website, for example. It could save both you and us time and money if it is.

What type of information can I ask for?

You can ask to have any recorded information. This can be in the form of emails, notebooks, videos or tapes.

When will I receive the information?

In most cases, we must respond to you within 20 working days of receiving your request. If we are not able to, we will explain why and let you know when you will receive a reply.

Can my request be declined?

The FoI Act sets out a number of reasons and circumstances where we can or must withhold information that we are asked for, such as if your request relates to someone else's personal details. Unless one of these applies to the information you have requested, we will provide it if we hold it.

If we do withhold any or part of the information, we will tell you why this is. If you do not find our explanation persuasive, you can ask us to reconsider our decision. We will provide details of how you should do this when we tell you we are unable to supply any information. The decision will then be reviewed by a panel of our Non-executive directors who will not have been involved with the original request. If you are not happy with the outcome of this, you can ask the Information Commissioner's Office to review that decision.

The Information Commissioner's Office is an independent body that enforces the FoIA and the Data Protection Act. For more information, visit www.ico.gov.uk or call 08453 091 091 for the Information Commissioner's FoIA leaflet.



What format can I request information to be in?

You can say what format you would prefer to receive the information in, ie on paper or electronically. We will provide the information in your preferred format if we can. If we cannot, we will advise you how we are able to provide it. In some cases, such as people with disabilities, there may be an entitlement to a particular format and you should discuss this with us if you believe this may be the case.

How much will it cost to make a request?

A lot of information may be supplied free of charge. However, you are likely to have to pay a fee if you ask for a lot of information that will take a long time to compile or cost a lot to produce copies. We will tell you in advance if a fee will apply and will suggest any ways in which you might be able to revise your request so that a charge will not be made for it.

How am I allowed to use the information I obtain?

You must ask us if you want to use the information you obtain from us for any purpose other than for your own interest and information, such as if you want to include it in any material you publish or make available to others. The request must be made in writing and clearly state how you want to use the information and why. We will consider your request in accordance with regulations that govern the re-use of information obtained from the public sector and will respond within 20 working days with our decision. If we do not agree to your request, we will tell you why and set out how you can ask for this to be reconsidered.

You should be aware that we are entitled to charge you for re-using information we have supplied to you. In most cases, we will only do so if you are passing the information on or publishing it for commercial or business purposes.

How can I find out more?

For more information on Freedom of Information, visit www.foi.gov.uk or www.ico.gov.uk

For information on the regulations concerning the re-use of public sector information, visit www.opsi.gov.uk.

How do I obtain this leaflet in other languages?

You can obtain this leaflet in other languages by contacting:

Carla Bryan
Information Governance Manager
South Western Ambulance Service NHS
Trust
Westcountry House
Abbey Court
Eagle Way
Exeter
EX2 7HY

Tel: 01392 261514



South Western Ambulance Service NHS Trust **NHS**

Obtaining Information from us under the Freedom of Information Act 2000

