

Responding to requests

All requests for information must be responded to within 20 working days. A fee can be charged when dealing with a request. This will be calculated in accordance with the Act. If a fee is required for information requested, the 20 day timescale can be extended to up to three months.

The Secretary of State has set limits to charges, should the request for information exceed these charges, this practice does not have to action the request. There maybe a charge for information not covered by the Act or for large amounts of information that might not otherwise be disclosed due to the cost.

The practice is not obliged to comply with vexatious requests or repeated or substantially similar requests from the same person other than at reasonable intervals.

Exemptions

There is a range of exemptions covering personal data, security, formulation of government policy commercial and individual confidentiality. A further absolute exemption is where information is accessible by other means or if the information has been provided in confidence. Other exemptions include information relating to commercial interests and audit functions.



Request for information

Requests must be in writing (email and fax acceptable) and must include the name and address for the correspondence and a clear description of the information requested.

Requests for information should be made to:

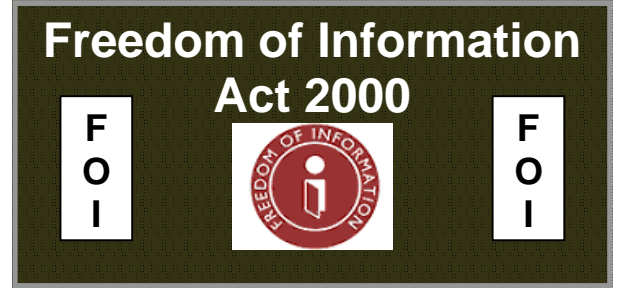
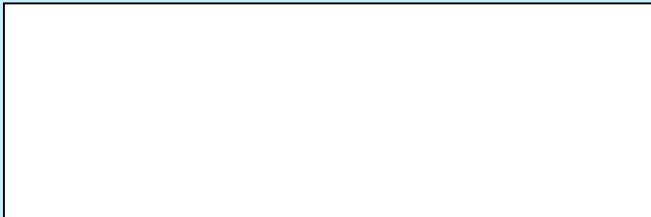
Sue Flanagan
Practice manager
Northumberland Heath Medical Centre
Hind Crescent, Erith, Kent DA8 3DB
Email:
northumberlandheath.medicalcentre@nhs.net

The Information Commissioner

The information Commissioner is an independent public body and reports directly to Parliament. The Commissioner is responsible for implementing the Act. Further information available at: <http://www.ico.gov.uk/>

Other informative FOIA websites:

<http://www.foi.nhs.uk/>



Better information, better health

- Information for GP patients on Freedom of Information

Freedom of Information Act 2000

The Freedom of Information Act, gives the general right of access to all types of recorded information held by the practice. The intention of the Act is to encourage a spirit of openness and transparency in the NHS and the whole public sector. Our organisation aims to fully support this.

The public have had full access rights from **January 2005**. This means that far more information will be routinely and freely made available. This is subject to some exemptions, which will be outlined later in this leaflet.

Any individual or organisation can make a request for information. The applicant does not have to explain why this information is requested. The Act gives the right to:

- be told if information exists
- receive information (ideally in the format requested, for example, as a copy or summary or the applicant may ask to inspect a record)

The Publication Scheme

This practice has developed a publication scheme. It is a guide to information, routinely published and gives indication of information intended to be published. The publication scheme describes the form in which the information is published and any fees that will be charged. A request can be made from information listed in this publication scheme.

The publication scheme can be accessed via the Practice Manager.

The main headings in the scheme are listed below:

Who we are

- details of the practice
- organisational structures
- key personnel
- how we fit into the NHS

Our services

- the range of services we provide under contract to the NHS
- practice leaflet

Financial and funding information

- funding details
- charging policies
- financial management
- purchaser equipment and supplies

Regular publications and information for the public

- guidance and information leaflets relating to the clinical services and health services we provide

Complaints

- how to make a complaint
- who to contact to make a complaint

Policies and procedures

- general policies and procedures including:
 - complaints policy
 - confidentiality
 - data protection
 - health and safety

This publication scheme

- changes to the scheme
- criteria on which information management policies are made in the practice
- proposed changes and additions to publications already available
- referral point for all enquiries regarding information management generally in the practice

Cost of information

- Details of any charges for providing information

Useful Resources

- List of useful websites
- List of useful publications