

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION HELPLINE

A new dedicated Freedom of Information Helpline to assist busy public sector information professionals and in house lawyers dealing with requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR).



Public authorities are increasingly receiving complex and time consuming FOI and EIR requests. These involve consideration of a number of FOI/EIR exemptions as well as relevant Information Commissioner and Information Tribunal decisions. Every month there are around thirty such decisions to consider and digest. Internal legal departments are often over stretched and dedicated FOI practitioners are hard to recruit. External legal advice in this area is very expensive and there are very few experts in this field with real experience of advising the public sector.

The Act Now FOI Helpline is designed to supplement your internal FOI/EIR expertise by acting as a “sounding board” or “signpost service” for you to discuss your FOI/EIR requests and possible responses. Our experts will guide you through the relevant area of law, discuss possible exemptions and how to deal with any complaints. The helpline is managed by Ibrahim Hasan, who is renowned throughout the UK as one of the leading information law experts.

At a time of increasing pressure on public sector budgets, the Act Now FOI Helpline is the most cost effective solution for your FOI/EIR problems.

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Annual Subscription</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">£499 + vat</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Who Should Subscribe?</u></p> <p>This service can be used by all those who are in charge of FOI/EIR compliance and advice within a public sector organisation and who wish to obtain up to date and practical advice without worrying about the costs. It is available to all parts of the public sector including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local authorities • PCTs and NHS trusts • Police forces • Non governmental agencies • Schools and Colleges • Universities • Outsourced companies • Waste and utility companies <hr style="border: 1px solid red;"/> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Our Helpline Experts</u></p> <p>Ibrahim Hasan, Paul Simpkins and Tim Turner</p> <p>All our experts are well known trainers and writers in this field with many years of public sector experience. They are on the editorial board of an international FOI journal and have lectured on this topic throughout the UK and abroad.</p> <p>Full biographies at www.actnow.org.uk.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>What is covered?</u></p> <p>The FOI Helpline allows two nominated members of your staff (for a twelve month period) to ring our experts and discuss any FOI or EIR request that they have received.</p> <p>Our experts will talk them through the request and the relevant considerations when responding or drafting a Refusal Notice.</p> <p>This would typically include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which regime applies – FOI/EIR? • Whether the information is “held” • What can be charged? • Key exemptions which may be claimed • Balancing the Public Interest factors • Vexatious or repeated requests • How to draft a refusal notice • What to include or leave out • Dealing with the Information Commissioner • Dealing with internal complaints • Latest FOI/EIR decisions and cases 	

<u>Common Queries</u>	<u>What is not covered</u>
<p>“This person keeps making many requests about the same issue by e mail. Can I treat him as vexatious?”</p> <p>“Is a request for a planning report FOI or EIR?”</p> <p>“The requested information is held by our consultants. Can I pass on their charge for producing it to the requestor?”</p> <p>PLEASE NOTE: Use of this service is subject to our terms and conditions (see below).</p>	<p>Please note that the aim of this service is to act as a telephone “sounding board” or “sign post” service. It is not meant to provide comprehensive legal advice about your specific request. We are unable to read lengthy documents or draft responses to requests on your behalf. Where you require this service we will discuss with you the possibility of referring your request to specialist lawyers for advice for an additional fee.</p>

FOI HELPLINE SUBSCRIPTION FORM

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Two easy ways to subscribe

Fax your subscription form to **01924 451129**

Post your subscription form to Act Now Training, 64 Bradford Road, Dewsbury, WF13 2DU

Once your subscription is processed we will send you a form to nominate your two helpline users plus the dedicated helpline number.

Terms and Conditions

1. This service is intended for specific FOI/EIR requests you have received. It is a “sounding board” or “sign post” service. We are unable to read lengthy documents or draft responses to requests on your behalf.
2. The service is available during working days (9am to 5pm). We aim to answer all queries immediately or within 24 hours if it is complex. However at busy times it may take slightly longer.
3. Responses to queries will be made by telephone. You can send queries by e-mail (and occasionally we may ask you to do this), but we cannot give a written response under this service.
4. This service can be used by one or two individuals nominated by you (e.g. the FOI officer or a lawyer in the legal department). You can change the nominated officers twice during each subscription year.
5. This service is not aimed at private sector lawyers or consultants. We reserve the right to refuse a subscription request.
6. We reserve the right to refuse to answer a query if it presents us with a conflict of interest.
7. Where a caller/organisation is making excessive use of this service, or is being argumentative or unreasonable, we may withdraw the service from such an organisation and refund the unused portion of the subscription.

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