

Freedom of Information Publication Scheme

(England, Wales and Northern Ireland)

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 aims to promote a culture of openness and accountability amongst public authorities (in this case dentists who provide NHS treatment) by providing people with rights of access to information held by them.

- Every dentist working under the NHS must make certain information available through a publication scheme to anyone who asks for it
- The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has published guidance which is provided unedited in pages 2-4 of this document
- The ICO provides a model template on which the template below is based
- The user remains responsible to ensure that their final version complies with the legislation
- The information contained in the publication scheme must be published or made public. The manner or format in which that information will be made available should be specified within each class (e.g. by hard copy, via memory stick, via a website or via CD Rom)
- Much of the information covered by the scheme will be available at no charge as it will already be available in the practice (e.g. in the practice leaflet) or on the practice website. However, where a practice will charge for information the cost must be reasonable and included in the scheme
- Dentists should also consider appropriate ways of publishing their schemes other than on the internet and take into account the needs of disabled people. If you have a website, the model scheme should be available online and easy to find. Otherwise, make sure it is publicised in another way, for example by announcing the new scheme in a newsletter or on a public notice board
- Changes to the Freedom of Information Act have added a requirement for practices to publish 'data-sets', upon request, in an electronic format that can be re-used, unless it would not be appropriate to do so. For more information see the ICO guidance on page 3 of this document
- It would not be appropriate for a practice to publish a 'data-set' if publication would breach data protection requirements or patient confidentiality
- A practice must publish information in accordance with its publication scheme
- A practice must perform periodic review of its publication scheme

Guidelines

Having read through this module you will need to elect a publication scheme leader who could be the practice manager. This person is the point of contact for information enquiries and is responsible for keeping the scheme up to date. Once the publication scheme leader has modified and completed the template to suit the practice situation, s/he should produce several copies of the document and keep them at reception for easy access by the members of the public. A few copies in a large print should be made available for visually impaired people. You can also upload the completed version to your website for download.

Further information

[Publication scheme guidance – ICO website](#)

Telephone the ICO: 0303 123 1113