



Information Statements and other required publications

The FOI Act requires agencies (other than Ministers or exempt agencies) to publish certain information about their operations, policies and practices, especially those that directly affect the lives of citizens. Publication requirements include an up-to-date Information Statement and internal manuals, and agencies must make copies of those documents available for inspection and purchase by members of the public.

The Information Commissioner encourages agencies to provide as much useful information as is practicable in both Information Statements and internal manuals, and to make these documents readily available and easy to understand.

Internal manuals

Internal manuals are defined to include policy manuals and documents containing rules, guidelines and practices used by an agency in connection with the performance of its functions, which are likely to affect public rights, privileges, benefits, obligations or penalties ([section 95](#)). The definition makes it clear that the kinds of documents that must be published are more than mere handbooks of instructions.

Internal manuals are the kinds of documents that structure decision-making in agencies. They are invaluable tools that assist the public to find out why agencies reach decisions about, for example, eligibility for benefits or assistance, or the criteria to qualify for support from the agency.

Information Statements

At intervals of not more than 12 months, each agency is required to ensure that an up-to-date Information Statement about the agency is published ([section 96](#)).

An agency's Information Statement should inform the public of the structure and functions of the agency, outline the types of documents held by the agency, and explain how the agency's documents can be accessed by the public ([section 94](#)).

A good Information Statement can be a very useful resource for both agencies and members of the public.

As part of their annual review of Information Statements, agencies should periodically review what information they routinely make available to the public outside the FOI process.

Agencies have the option of publishing their Information Statements as stand-alone documents or incorporated in their Annual Reports.

Where an Information Statement is produced as a stand-alone document, reference to its existence and details of how it can be inspected or purchased should be contained in the agency's Annual Report.

An agency must also provide a copy of its statement to the Information Commissioner as soon as practicable after the statement is published or a new edition produced ([section 97](#)). If the Information Statement is not changed between editions, the agency need only notify the Information Commissioner that the statement has been reviewed and is still current. Where minor amendments are made to an existing statement, copies of the amended pages may be forwarded in lieu of the entire document, if feasible.

If you have any general enquiries about the FOI process, please see our website or contact our office.

Note: This Information Sheet is intended as a general guide only and should not be viewed as legal advice. The Information Commissioner considers each complaint on its merits and according to the relevant circumstances.

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