

GWENT POLICE PROCEDURE **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION**



Heddlu
Gwent
Police

1.1 Procedure

This procedure supports Gwent Police Policy in respect to Freedom of Information (FOI), in making provision for FOI requests and reviews/appeals which are outlined in section 1.2 of this procedure with Appendix A at the rear of this document providing additional staff guidance.

FOI affects all police personnel.

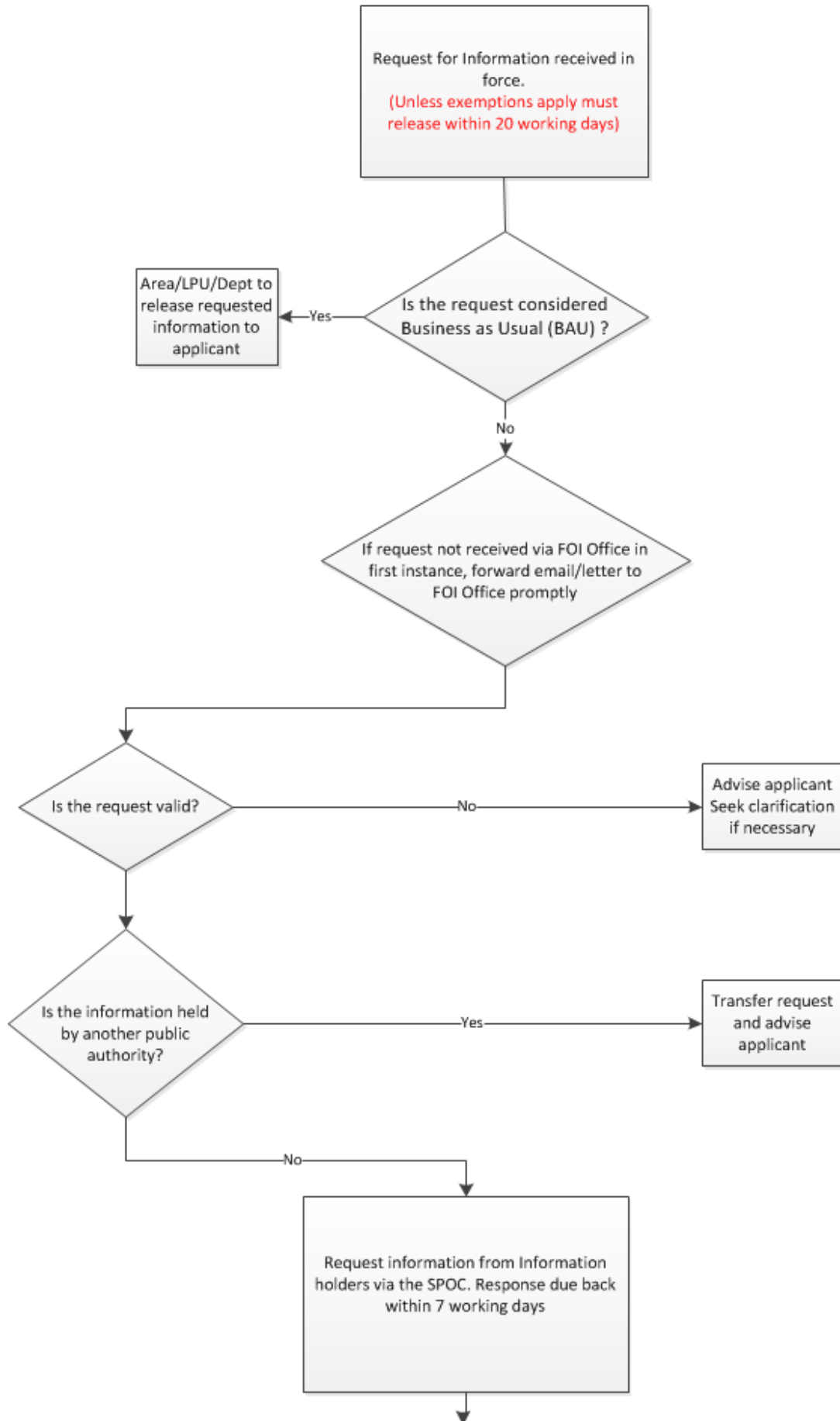
FOI gives a general right of access to all recorded information held by a public authority, unless the information contains tactical and strategic directives. You should consider whether disclosure would likely prejudice the prevention and detection of crime, the apprehension or prosecution of offenders, the administration of justice or the maintenance of security.

1.2.1 INDEX

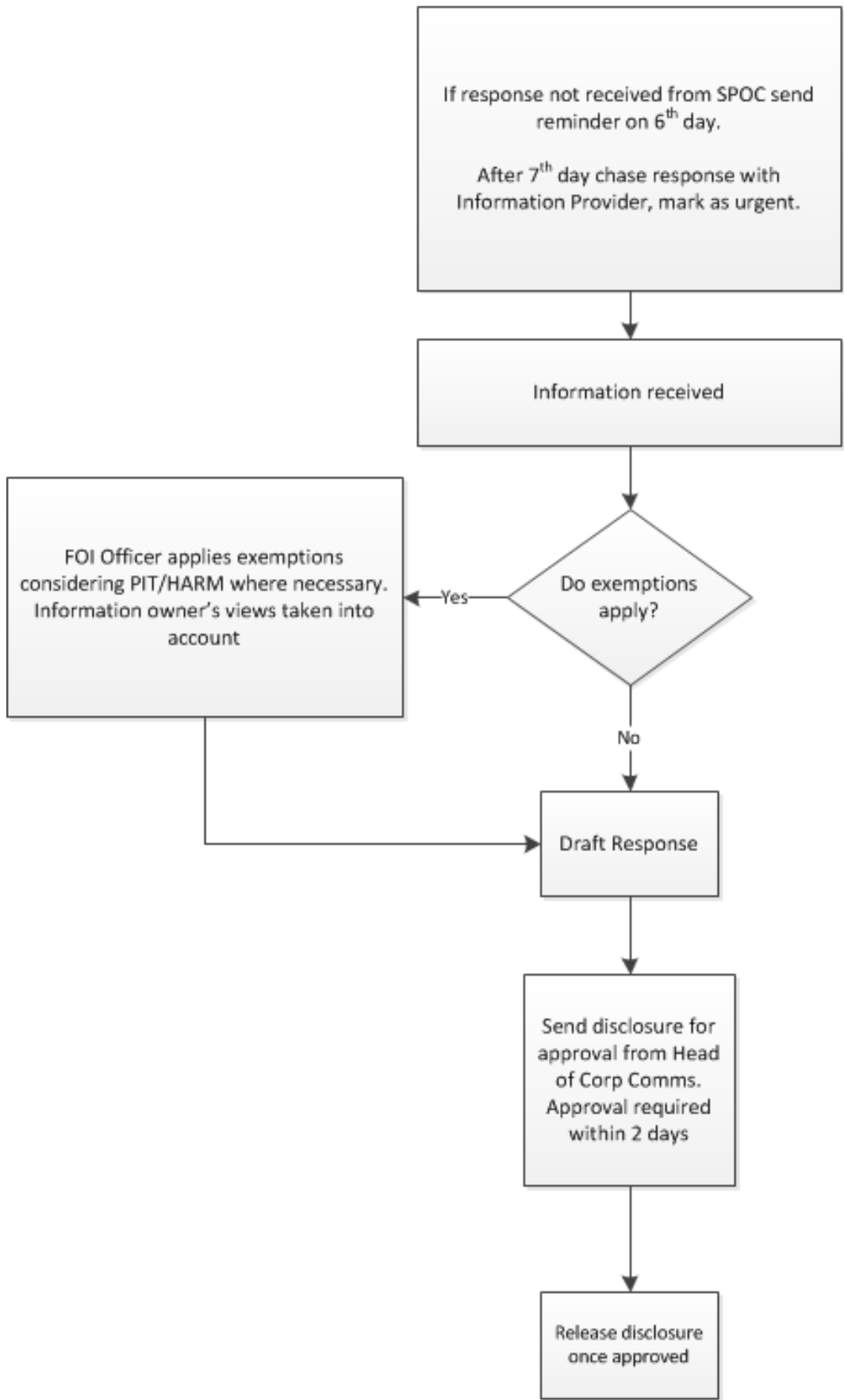
Quick Reference Flowchart	Page 2
Recognising an FOI Request	Page 5
Duty to Provide Advice and Assistance	Page 5
Business as Usual	Page 5
Receipt of Request	Page 7
Vexatious Requests	Page 7
Fees	Page 7
Costs Exceeding Appropriate Limit	Page 8
Transferring of Requests to another authority	Page 8
Data Protection	Page 8
Processing a Request	Page 8
Response to Requestors	Page 10
Environmental Information Regulations	Page 10
Safety Camera Partnership	Page 10
Publication Scheme	Page 11
Appendix A Gwent Police Personnel	Page 16

PRINTED VERSIONS SHOULD NOT BE RELIED UPON. THE MOST UP TO DATE VERSION CAN BE FOUND ON THE INTRANET POLICIES SITE

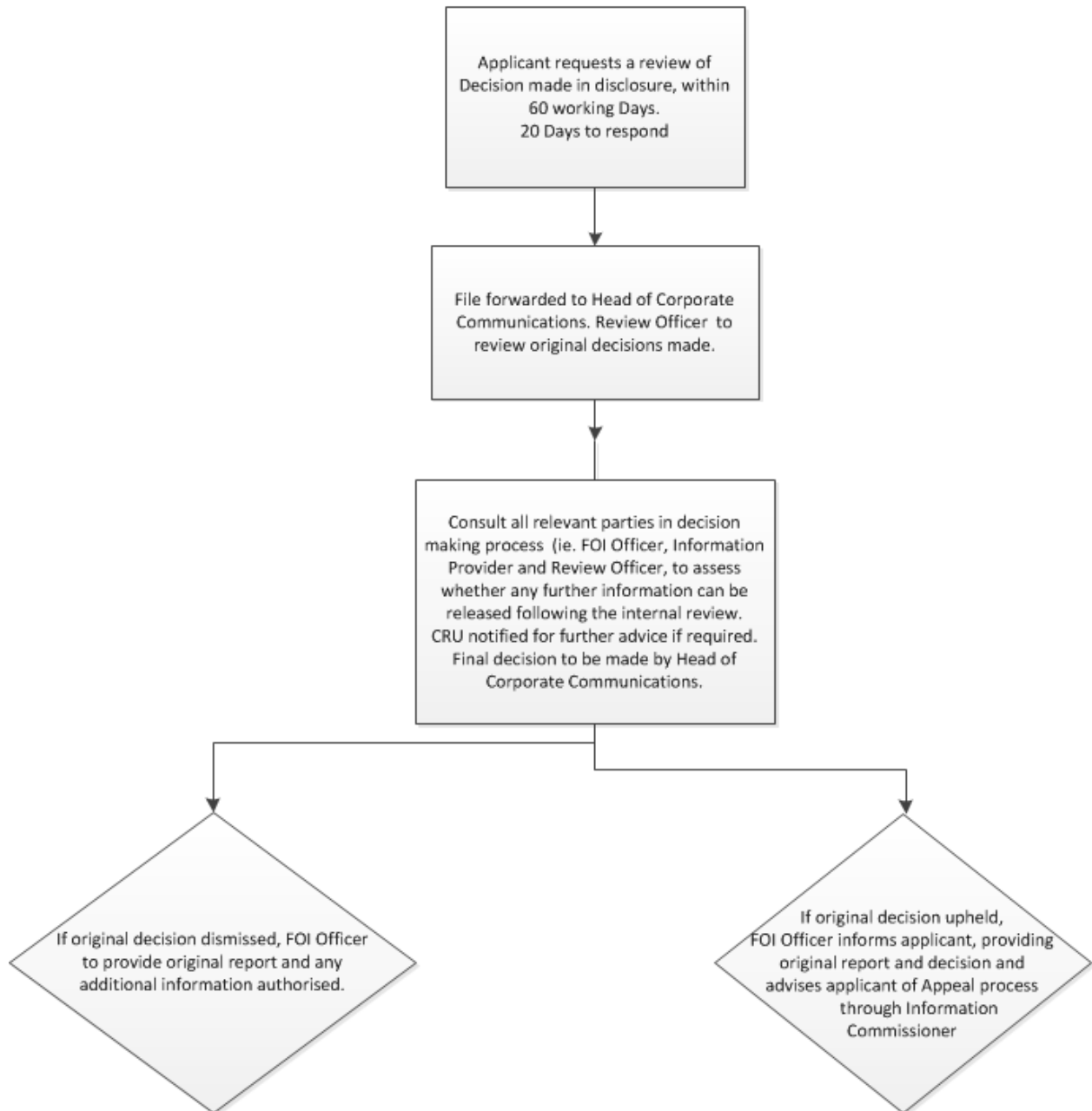
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION DISCLOSURE PROCESS CHART 1 (Issue 1 – 04.08.10



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION DISCLOSURE PROCESS CHART 2 (Issue 1 – 04.08.10



FOI REVIEW PROCEDURE CHART 1 (Issue 1 04.08.10)



1.2.2 Recognising an FOI Request

Requests for information under the FOI Act have to be in written format (including electronic) and can be submitted to any representative of the force. It must be remembered that a request does not have to specify that it is made under the Act nor does the requestor have to state the reason for the request, so vigilance is needed in identifying potential requests.

Staff should refer to the document “**Staff Guide – Dealing with Information Requests at Appendix A**” which acts as a supplement to this procedure for staff to be aware of their duties in dealing with requests for information.

1.2.3 Duty to Provide Advice and Assistance

Under Section 16 of the Act, Gwent Police as a public authority has a duty to “provide advice and assistance” to individuals who are trying to find information. Staff should be aware that if they are unable to help the person themselves they should attempt to direct the individual to someone who may be able to provide assistance (such as the FOI Officer).

1.2.4 Identification of an FOI Request

“Business as Usual”

1) In agreement with the Information Commissioner, the National ACPO FOI Project has recommended a business as usual philosophy. This means that routine requests for information should continue to be dealt with locally as they always have been dealt with. As a guide the following requests should be handled locally within departments and in-keeping with current business arrangements and normal business processes:

- Information requested by Local Authorities and other statutory agencies in line with Crime and Disorder Protocols and the functions of multi-agency public protection panels (all other LA/Councillor Enquiries through FOI).
- Information requested by other Public Authorities (who do not stipulate the request is under the FOIA) in relation to information sharing on individuals or law enforcement activities.
- Information requested from private companies who are providing out-sourced services to Forces.
- Provision of Court Welfare Reports to Courts for Child access Enquiries.
- Data Protection Subject Access (Where no 3rd Party info involved).
- Probation Service Welfare Reports/Supply of Pre-cons to Probation Service (inc. Victim Personal Statement Scheme).
- RTI Disclosures to Solicitors, Insurance Companies and Loss Adjusters.

- Information Supplied to Insurance Companies and Loss Adjusters under the ACPO/ABI Memorandum of Understanding.
- Information requested by the Passport Agency in line with the Memorandum of Understanding.
- Third Party Prosecutions (where pre-cons are supplied) by statutory agencies such as Inland Revenue, Benefits Agency or Customs and Excise etc.
- Prior-court Disclosures (Criminal Justice Act).
- Disclosure to CPS Lawyers where it involves prospective, ongoing or previous prosecutions.
- Information requested by Courts in relation to ongoing prosecutions (other than CJA go through Force Solicitors).
- Information requested by Coroner's Courts.
- CRB Vetting Disclosures.
- Disclosures to Victim Support Service (New Agreement).
- Requests from UK Police Forces in the process of Crime investigation or passing of criminal intelligence.
- Requests from Overseas Police Forces (through Force Intelligence Bureau -Interpol) or SB.
- Requests from the Fire Service under Local Agreements for Joint Investigations of complaints of Arson.
- CICA Requests (Through Crime Managers).
- Request from External Organisations for Personnel References.
- Requests from Occupation Health (where external organisation) about employees working on Force Policies.
- Requests from Trade Unions in relation to complaints investigation.
- Requests for recruitment information.
- Requests for Force pre-printed leaflets
- Requests about Special Service Agreements from sports stadia or other public entertainment venues.
- Requests for information made by Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC).
- (This is not an exhaustive list)

Although there is no need to deal with requests under the Act every time, the spirit of the Act should be applied to all requests for information (i.e they should be acknowledged as soon as possible and dealt with within 20 working days)

- 2) Any request for information that specifically states the Freedom of Information Act, Environmental Information Regulations or which requests information that it is felt should not be disclosed are to be directed to the Freedom of Information Officer.

- 3) Any request for personal details about individuals should be directed in the first instance to the Data Protection Officer. For further information see the Procedure Data Protection.
- 4) It is always better to contact the FOI Officer or DP Officer if you are unsure. If you consider that a request for information should be forwarded to the FOI or DP Officer it should be done so immediately after consultation in order to maximise the time available to respond.

1.2.5 Receipt of request

- 1) The FOI Officer will record all recognised FOI requests received on the database which generates a unique reference number for each request.
- 2) If upon receipt, a request is illegible or does not describe in enough detail the information sought, the FOI Officer will seek to clarify the request with the applicant and help as much as possible in identifying the information required.
- 3) Upon receipt, or once clarified, an acknowledgement will be sent to the applicant advising them of the date received. The applicant will be advised of the potential necessity if the request needs to be transferred either partially or in whole to another authority for response.

1.2.6 Vexatious Requests

1. If the FOI Officer judges that a request is vexatious or repeated, then an application for information can be refused in line with Section 14 of the Act. In all cases it will be the request which is judged to be vexatious and not the individual seeking information. Any request refused on these grounds has to be done so with clear evidence to support the refusal.
2. If a request is deemed vexatious or repeated, the applicant will be informed and will also be sent full details of the force Freedom of Information Review/Appeals Procedure.

1.2.7 Fees

1. The Act makes provision for the charging of fees for information. If to fully answer the request would cost in excess of £450, which equates to 18 hours work, charged at £25 per hour, then a Section 12 Refusal Notice will be applied.
2. Fees will be calculated in accordance with the statutory guidelines set down by the Department for Constitutional Affairs and the ACPO Manual of Guidance.

1.2.8 Cost exceeding Appropriate Limit

If the cost of compliance in the disclosure of information exceeds the “appropriate limit” as set down by Section 12 of the Act and the regulations set out by the DCA, the applicant will be informed that this is the case and the request will be refused.

3. If a request is refused on these grounds the FOI Officer has a duty under Section 16 of the Act to assist the applicant. If it would significantly decrease the cost. These could include a summary of the information requested or arranging a viewing of the information.

1.2.9 Transferring a request to another public authority

- 1) If the requested information is believed to be fully held or partly held by another public authority then firstly the FOI Officer will make contact with the designated authority and establish that it holds the information requested.
- 2) If the information is partly held by the alternate authority the requestor will be informed and can either apply directly themselves to that authority or it can be transferred by the FOI Officer dependant on the circumstances. The FOI Officer will continue to gather the information that Gwent Police holds to satisfy the rest of the request.
- 3) If it is established that the alternative authority holds all information the requestor will be contacted by the FOI Officer and informed that the request can be transferred or alternatively the requestor can apply direct to the authority with another FOI request.

1.2.10 Data Protection

- 1) Where a request for information asks for personal details pertaining to the applicant, this will be dealt with under the provisions of the Data Protection Act and passed to the Data Protection Officer.

1.2.11 Processing a request

- 1) Staff should refer to the document “**Staff Guide – Dealing with FOI Information Gathering Requests at Appendix A**” for further information.
- 2) The FOI Officer in processing a request will establish the whereabouts of the relevant information within force. Once information areas have been identified the FOI Officer will contact the information owner, who will be a designated Head of Business Area.
- 3) The Head of Business Area will designate appropriate persons under their authority to identify, locate and gather the required information, the Single point of Contact, SPOC..

4) The appropriate persons will supply the information to the SPOC for review and to quality assure it.

5a) Information should be provided in electronic format as standard and should be emailed to the SPOC.

5b) Where the information is available in Hard Copy only, the FOI Officer should be notified.

6) The SPOC should highlight to the FOI Officer areas which they consider would not be suitable for public disclosure. All information collected should be forwarded to the FOI Officer, within 7 working days, after the SPOC has quality assured it, and it has been authorised by the Head of Business area for release..

7) No information is to be withheld from the FOI Officer regardless of sensitivity. If necessary the FOI Officer can be invited to view sensitive information at source.

If there is a dispute in relation to any information that should be supplied to the FOI Officer, then the Head of Corporate Communications will intervene to assist in resolving this matter.

8) Weekly FOI information sheets will be supplied to the following each Friday:

Staff Officer
Legal Department
Head of Corporate Communications
All SPOC's
Special Branch

Any information that may have a bearing on any FOI Disclosure should be returned to the FOI department by the following Thursday.

1.2.12 Offences

All staff are reminded of Section 77 of the Freedom of Information Act which states:

"Where a request for information has been made to a public authority any person is guilty of an offence if he/she alters, defaces, blocks, erases, destroys or conceals any record held by the public authority, with the intention of preventing disclosure of all or any part of the information of which the applicant would have been entitled".

Any individual suspected of the above offence will be reported to the Professional Standards Department for investigation.

1.2.13 Evaluating Information for Disclosure

1) Once all information has been received by the FOI Officer, it will be assessed for disclosure. The FOI Officer will consult with information owners in order to further inform any decision on release if required. This includes consultation with outside third parties whose information we may be under an obligation to release. Any information to which exemptions have been applied will be withheld. The exemption will be clearly stated and, in the case of Non Absolute exemptions, the Public Interest Test arguments will also be documented.

1.2.14 Time Limit

If throughout any part of the process it is estimated that the time limit of 20 working days will be exceeded, the FOI Officer will inform the applicant at the earliest opportunity and will give a revised time-scale for completion of the request. (This WILL only be considered if exemptions are being considered in relation to the non release of information, or the request is particularly voluminous).

1.2.15 Response to Requestors

Once the process of gathering information and applying the exemptions is complete, it will be forwarded to the applicant, following approval by the Head of Corporate Communications or their appointed deputy.

Details will be also sent to advise the applicant how to initiate the Force FOI Review/Appeals Procedure and also how to contact the Information Commissioner.

1.2.16 Safety Camera Queries

Any query relating to safety cameras will be referred to the FOI Officer for collation. The applicant will be advised if there is a need to transfer their request to the Safety Camera Unit for a response.

1.2.17 Environmental Information Regulations (EIR)

Any request made under EIR will be dealt under the same principles as FOI requests as both access to information regimes are similar in nature. However there are a number of differences between the two pieces of legislation the most pertinent of which are summarised below.

- An EIR request need not be in writing

Anyone seeking environmental information whether in person, by telephone or in writing should be referred to the FOI Officer.

- There is no “appropriate limit” in terms of cost with which to refuse a request.

Although there is no upper limit cost fees will be calculated in the same way as FOI requests.

- There are limited exemptions.

There are fewer exemptions under EIR's and each requires a Public Interest Test. This Public Interest Test will be applied in the same way as non-absolute exemptions under the FOIA.

1.2.18 Publication Scheme Reviews

- 1) The FOI Officer will formally review the Publications Scheme on an Annual basis. However, the Scheme will be under constant review on an informal basis in order to ensure accuracy. (six monthly reminders will be published in General Orders and sent to all Heads of Business Area for them to cascade to those individuals within their areas of responsibility to amend where necessary, to ensure accuracy is maintained). All amendments WILL be forwarded to the Corporate Communications Department for inclusion in the Publication Scheme.
- 2) It is the responsibility of all department heads to review the data on the Publication Scheme that they are responsible for. This MUST be done on a quarterly basis. Any amendments must be completed immediately to ensure we maintain the accuracy of all published data.

1.2.19 Welsh Language Act

If an FOI request is received in Welsh, the response will be supplied in Welsh. However, as the business language of Gwent Police is English, any information requested will be supplied in the business language unless the particular document has already been translated.

1.2.20 Disability Act

Where possible "reasonable adjustment" will be made to accommodate individuals with a disability that impedes their right to information under the FOI Act, or from interpreting that information.

1.2.22 Freedom of Information Officer – Will be the central consultant on Freedom of Information and primary contact for internal and external enquiries. Will be responsible for processing requests, checking and applying exemptions and ensuring that Gwent Police complies with all aspects of the Act, including the Environmental Information Regulations.

1.2.23 Heads of Business Area & SPOC's - Will be responsible for the supply and collation of all requested information, quality assuring it's accuracy prior to forwarding to the FOI Officer, making recommendations as to areas of information deemed unsuitable for disclosure, and the reasons why. Will forward to the FOI Officer for final analysis.

1.2.24 Information Gatherers – Will respond to requests from the Freedom of Information Officer for information. Will seek out and gather that information to be presented to the SPOC for final approval prior to sending it to the FOI Officer through the Heads of Business Area.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REVIEWS/APPEALS

1.3.1 Initiation of Reviews/Appeals

1.3.2 Any written correspondence expressing dissatisfaction with the way a request for information was handled through the FOI Request Handling Procedure should be forwarded to the FOI Officer and will be treated as an FOI REVIEW/APPEAL.

1.3.3 If the individual has not been through the FOI Request Handling procedure in the first instance, any written dissatisfaction will not be treated as an FOI REVIEW/APPEAL, but serve to initiate the FOI Request Handling Procedure.

1.3.4 Any verbal contact whereby an individual expresses dissatisfaction with the way a valid request for information has been handled, should be directed to the Freedom of Information Officer, but must be received in writing before it can be processed.

1.3.5 Reviews/Appeals will be directed to the FOI Office in order to be logged and will then be forwarded to the Head of Corporate Communications. If an Appeal is received, this will be forwarded to the Information Commissioners Office for actioning.

1.3.6 The Head of Corporate Communications will oversee the review process and approve the final decision in writing giving reasons for the decision.

1.3.7 The review will be conducted by an Investigator, as designated by the Head of Corporate Communications.

1.3.8 When a review is received the Head of Corporate Communications will inform the Investigator at the earliest opportunity. The Investigator will then liaise with the FOI Officer and any other appropriate person in order to gather information on the original request and proceed with a review of the decisions made.

1.3.9 Once a review has been received it will be acknowledged within 7 days by the FOI Officer, and the appellant will be given an estimated time-scale for the completion of the review. This will be based on the complexity of the case and in all circumstances will be no more than 20 working days.

1.3.10 If it is likely that the original estimated time will be overrun, the appellant will be informed by the FOI Officer of the delay and given a revised time-scale.

1.3.11 Carrying out a review

1.3.12 The review process will look at all the aspects in which the original FOI request was handled. This will include whether procedures were correctly followed, redactions were applied correctly and whether all of the information relating to the request was gathered.

1.3.13 The Investigator can where necessary call a panel to assist in making any decisions on the review. This panel will usually consist of Information Owners whose information is the subject of the review as well as any other officers who the Investigator deems are suitable to give appropriate advice.

1.3.14 Conclusion of a review

1.3.15 The outcome of the review will be presented in report format to the Head of Corporate Communications. If the Head of Corporate Communications is not satisfied, any concerns will be raised with the Investigator who will carry out further investigation based on those concerns.

1.3.16 The Head of Corporate Communications, once satisfied that the appeal was conducted correctly and comprehensively, will authorise its release and forward it to the FOI Officer.

1.3.17 The FOI Officer will take a copy of the final report and any further documentation, will log the review out, and will forward the original report to the appellant.

1.3.18 In all cases, whatever the outcome of the review, details of how the appellant can appeal to the Information Commissioner will be included with the final report.

1.3.19 If, at the outcome of the Information Review process, it is decided that information that was previously withheld should be disclosed, this information will be forwarded to the appellant at the earliest opportunity by the Freedom of Information Officer.

1.3.20 If the outcome of the review is that proper procedures were not followed in the handling of the original request, the appellant will receive an explanation signed by the Head of Corporate Communications which will outline what will be done to rectify any error occurring in the future.

1.3.21 Any procedural defect recognised in the handling of the original FOI request will be highlighted to the FOI Officer in order to activate a review of

that procedure and make any necessary changes. This will serve to prevent further occurrences.

1.3.22 Documenting and Publishing Reviews/Appeals

1.3.23 Every concluded review/appeal will be held by the organisation for a period of 2 years for the purposes of any further investigation conducted by the Information Commissioner and to monitor trends so that necessary improvements in procedure can be recognised and implemented.

1.3.24 The FOI Officer will make available via the Publication Scheme yearly statistics indicating the results of reviews/appeals. This will include the number of reviews/appeals, whether they were upheld, partly withheld or denied and the success rate of completing reviews/appeals in an appropriate time. It may also include a brief summary of individual reviews/appeals but will not include any details of the appellant.

1.3.25 Individual Roles and Responsibilities

1.3.26 FOI Officer – Is responsible for documenting decisions arising out of Right of Access requests for information and making this documentation available to the Head of Corporate Communications.

1.3.27 Data Protection Officer – Role is to advise on issues relating to the release of personal information.

1.3.28 Head of Corporate Communications – Responsible for overseeing the review/appeal process and giving the final decision to its conclusions, on review.

1.3.29 Investigator – Responsible for conducting the review and presenting findings in report format to the Head of Corporate Communications for approval.

1.3.30 Heads of Business Area & SPOC's – Responsible for the provision and accuracy of information prior to it's release by the FOI Officer.

2.0 The Legal Basis and Legitimate Aims

Freedom of Information Act 2000

3.0 Human Rights Certification of Compliance

The following articles of the Human Rights Act 1998 may be engaged

Article 2, Article 3, Article 6, Article 8, Article 9, Article 10, Article 11

Article 14

Consideration must be given in relation to the potential to discriminate against the parties involved.

Enquiries may be intrusive and there is always the potential to discriminate but this policy will be implemented in a proportionate manner with the intention of ensuring that individuals rights are not unlawfully infringed:

" In the application of this policy the Force will not discriminate against any persons regardless of sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with national minority, property, birth or other status as defined under article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights ".

4.0 Compliance with The Welsh Language Scheme

This policy will comply with the organisations Welsh language Scheme in terms of dealing with the Welsh speaking public, impact upon the public image of the organisation and the implementation of the Welsh Language Scheme, Action Plan.

5.0 Risk Assessment and health and safety Considerations

Police personnel are required to consider making the appropriate risk assessment when implementing this procedure'.

Police personnel should apply the Gwent Police Service Dynamic Risk Assessment. A training package in the use of the risk assessment will be provided to all police personnel.

6.0 Procedure Identification Section

Procedure Title: Freedom of Information

Reference:

ACPO Lead: Deputy Chief Constable

Service Area Owner: Head of Corporate Communications Department

Department Responsible: Corporate Communications Department

Links to other Policies/Procedure: Data Protection, Information Security, and all other policies and procedures located on the Force Intranet and Internet sites.

Procedure Implementation Date:

Procedure Review Date: Two years from implementation

APPENDIX A



GWENT POLICE PERSONNEL

Dealing with public requests for information

1. The Freedom of Information Act 2000

The Freedom of Information Act is intended to allow anyone in the world to obtain information they require from public authorities. Hence, Gwent Police is covered by the legislation, which places three basic requirements on us:

- ◆ that we routinely put in the public domain through the Publication Scheme as much information about ourselves as is reasonably possible
- ◆ that we ensure where an individual requires information we hold, but have not already published, we provide the enquirer with the relevant information (subject to exemptions)
- ◆ that we have in place a properly structured approach to managing records to ensure that essential records of our activities are maintained in appropriate detail (and hence relevant information is readily available to the public)

This guide is specifically designed to help you deal with requests for information and understand the FOI process.

2. Gwent Police Publication Scheme

The organisation already places some information in the public domain, including action plans of Management meetings. These are usually published via the organisation web site at www.gwent.police.uk though some materials may be published on paper and then made generally available.

As required by the Freedom of Information Act, some of the information that the organisation places in the public domain is listed in our Publication Scheme, which describes both the types of information available and where it can be located.

3. The right to request information

The right to request information under the Act extends to anyone who wishes to make an enquiry. There is no limitation on who may make an enquiry – the law gives the right to minors and adults alike, and anyone in the world is equally entitled to request information.

Enquirers do not have to disclose why they require the information they seek. Enquirers need not quote (or even be aware of) their rights under the Act to make a request for information. The only requirement the law places on an enquirer is that they must **describe the information required in writing, provide a name and address for correspondence**, for it to have the authority of a request made under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act.

In all cases, the information (or ways the individual can find that information) must be provided within **twenty working days** (i.e not including Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays) of receiving a written enquiry. This is a very short response time so, if you are in any doubt as to whether an enquiry may be a Freedom of Information enquiry, or you cannot respond from the records available to you, you must contact the Freedom of Information Officer **immediately**.

4. Data Protection vs. Freedom of Information

It is important to distinguish requests made under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998 and those made under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

If an individual wishes to have a copy of any personal data held about them by Gwent Police (i.e. conviction history/Prosecutions) then this is a Subject Access Request and such enquiries should be referred to the Data Protection Officer.

If an individual is asking for general information about the organisation, its activities, or any other material held in our records, then this is a Freedom of Information request. If it is not possible to tell exactly what sort of request is being made, or a request appears to cover elements of both Acts, such enquiries should **always** be referred in the first instance to the Freedom of Information Officer or Data Protection Officer.

5. Business as Usual

There is no intention to stop staff providing information directly in response to a written request where this has always been the case: staff involved in

distributing routine information (e.g. Service Area Plans) should continue to deal with these requests as normal as should individuals with responsibility for corresponding with the public on general issues. In any case business as usual requests should be dealt with expeditiously.

Verbal enquiries (e.g. those made over the telephone) do not have the force of law. However, if your department receives such an enquiry and you are unable to satisfy the query verbally through normal business as usual routes, you should advise the enquirer that they can make the request official by writing to the Freedom of Information Officer. If necessary you can direct their call to the Freedom of Information Officer.

If the individual is requesting information already in the public domain we have a duty to “provide advice and assistance” and inform the individual as to where that information can be found (such as the Publication Scheme).

6. Recognising an FOI Request

If the request is a “business as usual” request you should deal with it as above.

You should contact the FOI Officer if the request fits the following criteria:-

- The request states that it is made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR’s).
- The request asks for information that, upon consultation with your Head of Area/LPU/Department, you feel should not be disclosed (for example the information may contain personal information about an individual or may reveal operation tactics and procedures)
- The request asks for information that is held outside of your department and you do not know where the information can be found.

Please remember that we owe enquirers a general duty of confidentiality – when considering a request and/or passing it to any other member of staff, you should only provide the personal details of the individual on a need-to-know basis only.

Generally, you should respond directly to any enquiries that can be dealt with simply and completely within your department/section: any other enquiries beyond this should be forwarded to the Freedom of Information Officer.

7. Other relevant issues

i) **Exemptions.** The law does permit the application of certain exemptions. These relate typically to information that may have a bearing on the type of work we do. Potential examples include:

- Personal information
- Information relating to the investigation or commission of a crime
- Information that could inhibit Gwent Police to effectively tackle crime
- Information provided in confidence
- Security and Intelligence material

(this is not an exhaustive list)

If you receive an information request that covers information that is not in our Publication Scheme and that includes information about individuals (staff, etc) or commercially sensitive information, then please consult the Freedom of Information Officer immediately. **NB. The Freedom of Information Officer will always take responsibility for refusing any written request based on the exemptions in the Act – refusal should not be undertaken by anyone else.**

- ii) **Complaints Reviews and Appeals.** In any case where the organisation declines to respond (or fails to respond *fully*) to an information request, the enquirer does have the right of appeal. Should an enquirer lodge a complaint with your department about the nature and/or content of any response please forward this complaint to the Freedom of Information Officer, who will follow up the complaint and will inform the enquirer of the right to the review/appeal process.
- iii) **Clarification.** The Organisation has the right to ask an enquirer for more details to clarify their request in cases where it may not be immediately clear what information they require. If you decide to deal with an enquiry you must be sure that you are clear what information you have been asked to provide: if not, then you may approach the enquirer for clarification. If in doubt, ask the Freedom of Information Officer.
- iv) **Costs and fees.** In the main FOI Requests are dealt with free of charge. However if the cost of complying with a request would exceed the “appropriate limit” as laid down by the fees regulations in the Freedom of Information Act 2000 we can refuse the request. This currently stands at £450 worth of work based on a flat rate of £25 per hour, this translates as 18 hours worth of work. You should note that this will **not** change current charging regimes where we levy a cost for information and these queries should be dealt with as normal.
- v) **Statistics.** The Act does **not** require us to provide enquirers with specialist statistical information that the organisation does not normally produce. Hence, some general requests can be answered by provision of the Annual Plan. All other statistical requests (unless business as usual) should be forwarded to the Freedom of Information Officer for consideration.
- vi) **Organised campaigns.** The law allows us to refuse multiple information requests made as part of a campaign. If you receive multiple enquiries of a similar nature you should **not** refuse to co-operate but you must always inform the Freedom of Information Officer, who will be able to take a view on whether a campaign is being instigated and, if not, may make arrangements to add the frequently-requested information to the organisation’s Publication Scheme.

8. In summary

Please be aware of the implications of the Freedom of Information Act, and make sure that colleagues are also aware that:

- ◆ Individuals may now ask for us to provide them with much of the information held by the organisation, where ever it is held in the organisation.
- ◆ Any request in writing is legitimate whoever it is addressed to within force, as long as it is legible and describes the information required.
- ◆ Anything you write or record can potentially be viewed by a member of the public. Therefore ensure that the records you keep are accurate and professional. A high proportion of FOI request enter the media, and you should be conscious that this could affect you and the information you hold..
- ◆ If in doubt consult the Freedom of Information Officer: we have as little as **twenty working days to respond**.
- ◆ You should respond to the FOI Officer as soon as possible if asked for information.

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