



Access to Information Policy

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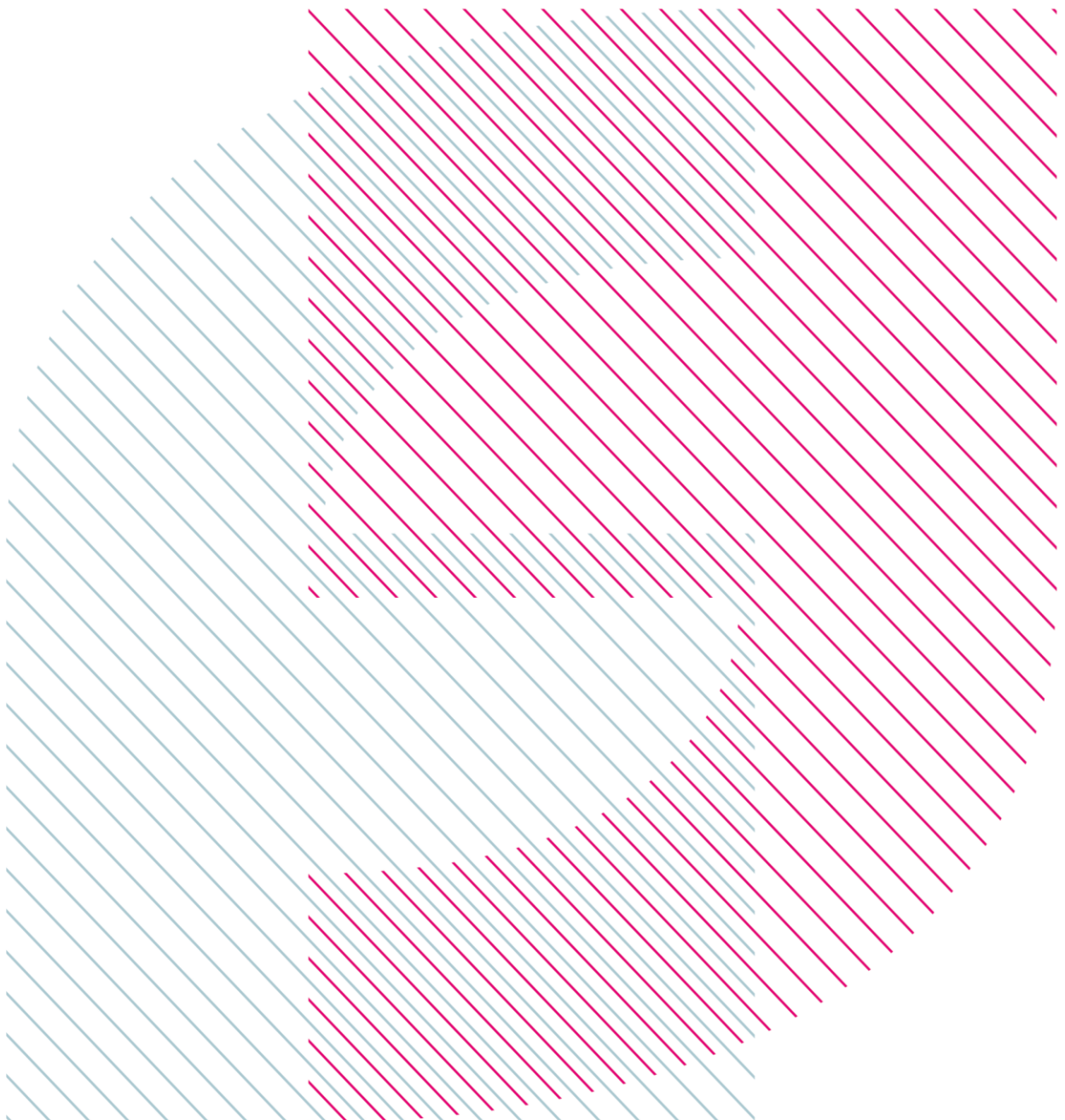


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Latest update

Version	Date	Summary of Changes	Actioned by (role)
2.4	26/08/2021	Full document review	DPICO
3.0	02/2021	Full document review	DPICO/Security forum
3.0	07/2021	Decision on whether to publish Ombudsman photo on website	Executive Team
3.0	10/2021	Full document review	Executive Team
4.0	01/2023	Full document review	DPICO
4.0	03/2023	Full document review	DCO/SIRO
4.0	07/2023	Full document review	Executive team
5.0	06/2024	Full document review	DPICO
5.0	7/2024	Full document review	Security forum
5.0	8/2024	Full document review	Executive team
6.0	7/2025	Full document review	Security forum/Executive
7.0	7/2026	Full document review	DPICO/Security forum/Executive

Purpose

The Legal Ombudsman (LeO) is committed to operating in an open and transparent manner. This policy sets out the information we will publish, and how you can request information we hold.

Scope

This policy provides staff with an understanding of information the organisation is obligated to publish and members of the public with information they can request from the organisation.

Responsibilities

The Legal Ombudsman will publish general information about the organisation such as:

- a) How to contact us
- b) Internal contacts and committees
- c) Details about how we are organised
- d) Web links to other related bodies and information (e.g. Approved regulators, Legal advice organisations, other ombudsman schemes).
- e) Executives and Ombudsman register of interests.
- f) Biographies of our Board members (the OLC)
- g) Biographies of Executive Team
- h) OLC Board members' register of interests

- i) Gifts and Hospitality
- j) Executives and Ombudsman expenses

Policy statement

The Legal Ombudsman is committed to operating openly by:

- a) Responding positively to every reasonable request for information in order to maintain a high level of public and stakeholder trust and confidence in our organisation.
- b) Routinely publishing information as part of our Publication Scheme.
- c) Processing rights of access to information which are set out in the Freedom of Information Act, the Data Protection Act, and the Environmental Information Regulations.
- d) Publish information about both our work, and that of our Board, the Office for Legal Complaints (OLC).

1.0 What we publish

1.1 What we spend and how we spend it

We will publish information about our finances: for example, our forecast and actual income, plus what we spend, what we buy, and the contracts we have with external suppliers.

- a) Annual Reports and Accounts
- b) Business Plan
- c) Board and Senior Manager expenses reports

1.2 Expenditure

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) will publish on behalf of the LeO

- a) Payments made to suppliers of £25,000 or more per month and the associated services or goods procured.
- b) Details of all credit card payments worth £500 and above, including the associated goods or services purchased.

1.3 Board and Executive Team expenses

We will publish:

- a) Expenses incurred by, or on behalf of, members of the OLC and the Legal Ombudsman's Senior Executives

1.4 What our priorities are and how we are doing

We will publish information about our future plans and how well we are performing:

- a) Annual Reports and Accounts
- b) Business Plan
- c) Corporate strategies
- d) Pay Gap Reporting
- e) Public Sector Equality Duty Objectives.

1.5 How we make decisions

We will publish information about our decision-making processes and consultations.

- a) Public consultations
- b) Summaries of stakeholder responses to significant public OLC/LeO consultations
- c) Committee constitutions and terms of reference
 - OLC Board (the Legal Ombudsman Board)
 - OLC Remuneration and Nomination Committee
 - OLC Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
 - OLC Public Interest Decisions Committee
 - OLC Performance Sub-group
- d) Agreed minutes of meetings
 - OLC Board (the Legal Ombudsman Board)
 - OLC Remuneration and Nomination Committee
 - OLC Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
 - OLC Public Interest Decisions Committee
- e) Board meeting papers will generally be published in full, although it may be necessary in some circumstances to extract or to redact specific information or, occasionally, to withhold publication.

1.6 Our policies and procedures

We will publish information about:

- a) Our most commonly requested policies and procedures
- b) How to complain about us
- c) Our scheme rules
- d) Our governance documents

1.7 Lists and registers

We will publish details of the various lists and registers of information we are required to publish, either by law or by other external regulations:

- a) Our gifts and hospitality register
- b) OLC Board members' register of interests
- c) Ombudsman and Executives register of interests

1.8 The services we offer

We will publish general advice and guidance about our service:

- a) Publications
- b) Public Interest Decisions
- c) Case studies
- d) Data relating to decisions we have made
- e) News and events
- f) Media releases

2.0 Right to access

You can request information that has not already been published via our publication scheme under the following:

2.1 Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000 & Environmental Information Regulations 2004

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations 2004 provide a right to request any recorded information held by a Public or Arms' Length body such as the Legal Ombudsman.

This does not mean that LeO is always obliged to provide the information. In some cases, there will be a good reason why we would not make public some or all of the information requested.

We can refuse an entire request under the following circumstances:

- a) It would cost too much or take too much staff time to deal with the request.
- b) The request is vexatious.
- c) The request repeats a previous request from the same person.

In addition, the FOIA contains a number of exemptions that allow LeO to withhold information from you. In some cases it will allow LeO to refuse to confirm or deny whether we hold information.

If LeO is refusing all or any part of a request, a written refusal notice will be sent.

The FOIA applies only to recorded information. It does not cover requests for explanations, opinions, comments, interpretations, or information that has not been recorded.

Where a request does not give sufficient detail to enable LeO to process the request, the Information Rights and Security Team will contact the applicant and advise them of the clarification that is required to make their application more detailed. While clarification is sought, there will be a pause on the time until a response is received. The statutory timeframe for Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations request disclosure is 20 working days.

2.2 UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), Data Protection Act 2018 and Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 (DUAA)

Under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018 and Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 (DUAA), you have the right to request personal and special category information the Legal Ombudsman holds about you, whether on paper or in electronic records, referred to as a subject access request (SAR). A third party can make a SAR on someone's behalf; however, the data subject's permission would be required, or the third party must be someone permitted to act on their behalf.

'Personal data' is defined as data that relates to a living individual who can be identified from the information held by the 'data controller' (in this case, the Legal Ombudsman).

The information you are entitled to under the legislation includes:

- a) a description of the data being used;
- b) what it's being used for;
- c) who might see or use the information;
- d) where the data comes from, if this is known; and
- e) the identity of the data controller.
- f) Where your data needs rectification or needs to be erased
- g) Where you may object to further processing
- h) Informed decision in relation to automation and profiling

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your personal and special category data, you have the right to raise a complaint. Complaints may include, but are not limited to:

- a) the way we have responded to your subject access request (SAR), or other rights request;
- b) the security measures we have used to store your information (e.g. someone who has been impacted by a data breach, regardless of whether it's reportable to ICO); or
- c) how we have collected or used your personal information (e.g. where we have stored it, how long we have kept it for, or its accuracy).

Complaints should be submitted to the Information Rights and Security Team and will be acknowledged within 30 days. The complaint will be investigated, and a written outcome will normally be provided and responded to 'without undue delay'.

If you remain dissatisfied following the outcome of your complaint, you may raise your concerns directly with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire

SK9 5AF

Website: icocasework@ico.org.uk

Telephone: 0303 123 1113

[Contact us - public | ICO](#)

A response to a Subject Access Request (SAR) will be provided within one calendar month of receipt. If there is any delay in meeting this timescale, the data subject will be informed as soon as possible and kept updated on the progress of their request.

3.0 Confirming the requester's identity

To avoid personal data about an individual being sent to another, either by a genuine request or because of deception, LeO needs to be satisfied with the identity of the requester. LeO will endeavour to request information that is proportionate using 'reasonable means'.

Where information is related to a deceased, a copy of probate or power of attorney will be requested. If necessary, the requester may be advised that a court order may be required to access the information if no other official documentation can warrant disclosure to the third party.

When requesting information, please include the following details:

- a) For SARs, at least two official documents to verify your identity (including your address)
- b) For Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) requests, please include your name, address or email address.

If a request is submitted electronically, the Legal Ombudsman will provide the information in a commonly used electronic format. However, where the data subject or requester asks for the information to be supplied in an alternative format, this will be considered where appropriate.

4.0 What if the request is manifestly unfounded or excessive?

Where requests are manifestly unfounded or excessive, in particular because they are repetitive, the Legal Ombudsman can charge a reasonable fee taking into account the administrative costs of providing the information or refuse the request.

Where the Legal Ombudsman refuses to respond to a request, LeO will explain why to the requester, informing them of their right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office without undue delay.

5.0 Will the requester be charged a fee?

We do not charge a fee when a request is made. In a case where the request is excessive and

repetitive, a fee may be charged. The fee may cover communication costs, such as photocopying, printing and postage.

For information requested under FOIA, we may charge fees as set out by The Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004. If fees apply, we will let you know what they will be in advance. Under the FOIDPR 2004 fees guidance, if we estimate that the cost of:

- determining whether we hold the information; and
- locating it, retrieving it, and extracting it

is more than £450, we are not obliged to comply with the request. £450 is equivalent to two and a half days work at a set rate of £25 per hour. There is no appropriate limit for access to Environmental Information.

6.0 Is the requester entitled to the Information?

Although we are committed to providing the information you have asked for, some information you ask for may be exempt from disclosure. The reasons information can be withheld from disclosure are set out in the UK General Data Protection Regulation, Data Protection Act, Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 (DUAA), Freedom of Information Act, Environmental Information Regulations and the Legal Services Act 2007. If we are unable to provide you with the information, we will provide you with an explanation for refusal. In some instances, other legislation may prevent the Legal Ombudsman from disclosure under our obligations concerning access to information.

7.0 How to make a request for information?

If you need to place a FOI, SAR or make a complaint, please contact the Legal Ombudsman Information Rights and Security Team at:

The Information Rights and Security Team
PO Box 6168
SLOUGH
SL1 0EL
E-mail: infosec@legalombudsman.org.uk

The Information Commissioner Office upholds information rights. Their website provides guidance and advice at <https://ico.org.uk/>

Related documents

Information and Data Protection Policy
Security Policy
UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
Data Protection Act 2018
Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 (DUAA)
Freedom of Information Act 2000
The Environmental Information Regulations 2004
The Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004

Further information

If you have any queries, please email Information Rights and Security Team - infosec@legalombudsman.org.uk.