# Freedom of Information Requests Procedure

## **Issue sheet**

Document reference: NHSBSAFOI002

Document location: Developing Policy and Strategy\Develop or Review FOI Policy\Current and Final

Title: Freedom of Information Requests procedure

Author: Chris Gooday

Issued to: All NHSBSA staff

Reason issued: For information / action

Last reviewed: 19 March 2025

Review Cycle: On significant change / every 2 years

Date of Wellbeing and Inclusion Analysis: No Impact

Date of Accessibility Review: 23 February 2023

## **Revision details**

| Version | Date | Amended by | Approved by | Details of amendments |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Initial release | 31.05.2007 | - | IGSG | On page 4 of 6 of the procedure, the box arrived at on the right hand side of the page, due to an affirmative response from the decision box on the left hand side of the page is to be amended to ensure that what can be provided within the appropriate limit is discussed with the requesterThe third bullet point of note 2 to have added “if applicable”. |
| a | 14.07.2009 | G Wanless | IGSG | *Information Governance Manager (IGM) changed to Head of Information Governance (HoIG)* |
| b | 3.11.2010 | G Wanless | IGSG | *Addition of letter 12 for repeat requests* |
| c | 28.2.2014 | C Gooday | APF | Reflect centralised process |
| d | 15.02.2023 | C Gooday | Information requests portal project | Reflect changes in process |
| e | 19.03.2025 | C Gooday | IG Team | Minor wording changes |
|  |  |  |  |  |

## **1 Receiving the request**

All requests for information held by the NHSBSA that are not answered as business as usual must be forwarded to the Information Governance Team (IG).

Any person, including a limited company or other legal entity, can make a request for information. There is no requirement for them to state the reason for their application.

If personal information is requested, the provisions of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) will apply.

.

If the request is received:

* **by letter/email/Social Media, -** forward the request toIG.
* **Through online Information Requests Portal –** this will be forwarded to IG by the Portal.
* **by telephone,** in exceptional circumstances**,** the member of staff taking the call will log details of the request and forward the call recording, or an email note if the call was not recorded to IG . **They must provide full details of the request and contact information for the requester.**

## **2 Checking the Request**

On receipt of the request, IG will ensure that:

* There is a valid name and contact details.
* the requester has provided sufficient information to identify which NHSBSA system or service needs to be searched to locate the information requested.

## **3 Logging the request**

When all the necessary information has been received, IG will:

* allocate a unique reference number for future internal / external correspondence regarding the request.
* record the date the request was received.
* record the relevant details of the requester.
* the business service it relates to
* send an acknowledgement to the requester.

If the request is unclear then IG will contact the requester via email or letter. If no reply is received after two months, the request will be closed.

## **4 Initiating the search**

IG will email the request details to the NHSBSA Team responsible for the relevant system(s) that needs to be accessed. Using the relevant email templat*e*, IG will advise the appropriate staff member of:

* the date the Request was received.
* the date the information needs to be provided to IG to comply with the 20 working day requirement.
* sufficient information required to search the relevant system(s) or service for the requested information.
* Ask for any reasons why the information may not be held, take longer than 18 hours to locate, extract and retrieve or any disclosure exemptions that may apply and the reasons why.

Any questions or anticipated delays in responding within the timescale quoted should be directed to IG.

## **5 Carrying out the search**

The appropriate NHSBSA Team will search the relevant systems requested.

## **6 Handling not held search results**

### Informing IG

The appropriate NHSBSA Team will respond to IG stating no information was found, the search parameters used and reasons (where appropriate) why the information was not found (i.e. not held for business purposes or beyond retention period) and which other public authority may hold it.

###  Informing the requester

Having received the relevant information from the appropriate NHSBSA staff member, IG will issue a not held response to the requester.

**6.3** Retention

The files will be retained for two years.

## **7 Handling held search results**

**7.1** Informing IG

The appropriate NHSBSA Team will, in the case of:

* **electronic information** – email the electronic information to IG or use a secure portal and state any views about why the information should not be disclosed to the requester.
* **paper or microfiche** – make photocopies or scan images, ensuring they are of good quality. They will then return the originals to the relevant system and forward the photocopies/images to IG and state any views about why the information should not be disclosed to the requester.

**7.2** Informing the requester

IG will ensure that:

* the information is what has been requested.
* the information is of a suitable quality for disclosure.
* There are clear explanations to provide context for the requester to understand the information
* the reasons for not disclosing some or all of the information requested.
* any third parties, whose information is included, are consulted by using the relevant template where appropriate, or that third party personal data is redacted from the documentation.

IG will also review the information. If there are any exemptions against disclosure, the requester will be informed.

If no exemptions are to be claimed, then a full disclosure response will be issued to the requester with a copy of the information. A copy of the requested response will be published on the FOI Disclosure log. For requests made by Social media a link will be provided to the specific page on the FOI disclosure log.

**7.3** Retention

Files containing the FOI request, associate correspondence and a copy of the information supplied will be retained forttwo years.