

## Freedom of Information Procedure

**December 2024**

The Office of the Commissioner for Older People (COPNI) seeks to be open and accountable and believes that public access to our information improves understanding of our role.

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the FOI Act) gives everyone a general right of access to information held by public authorities in the UK, subject to certain exemptions. It also places a statutory duty on bodies covered by the Act to make certain information publicly available as a matter of course. COPNI, as with all public authorities, has adopted a Publication Scheme which has been approved by the Information Commissioner and which is available on our website.

<https://www.copni.org/publications>

If the information you require is not listed in our Publication Scheme, you may make a request in writing to us for the information.

### **Making a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000**

Responsibility for Freedom of Information requests rests with the COPNI Data Protection Officer. They can be contacted by writing to the following address:

Data Protection Officer  
Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland  
Equality House  
7-9 Shaftsbury Square  
Belfast  
BT2 7DP

Telephone: 028 90890892  
Email: [dpo@copni.org](mailto:dpo@copni.org)

Where a request is received, it will be dealt with promptly and usually **within 20 working days**. If additional time is required, this will be advised to you in writing.

We will disclose information wherever possible, whilst redacting personal information contained within the documentation in order to protect the identity of any named persons. However, in a few circumstances, it will be necessary to withhold some, or all of the information requested under one of the exemptions outlined in the Act. In any case where information is refused, COPNI will specify which exemption has been used and why. All requests for information will be carefully considered on their own merits and with close regard to the public interest.

### **What to do if you have a complaint about the response to or handling of a request for information:**

The FOI Act makes provision for appeal against the response given to a request for information, or to challenge the way in which a request was handled.

In the first instance you should contact the Chief Executive Officer in writing.

Your complaint will be handled by a suitably authorised senior member of COPNI who is unconnected with the initial request. The complaint will be acknowledged in writing within five working days of receiving it and the letter will say when you can expect a full response. This should normally be within three weeks unless the matter is very complicated (for example, where other organisations need to be contacted). Where this is the case, we will let you know what action is being taken and tell you when we expect to provide you with a full response.

Where applicable the review of your request will consist of an analysis of the initial reasons for withholding the information and, also where applicable, a consideration of how and why the public interest test was applied.

If the Chief Executive (or other suitably authorised senior member of COPNI) overturns the original decision, the request will be processed and the information released to you, entirely or in part.

If the Chief Executive (or other suitably authorised senior member of COPNI) upholds the original decision you will receive a letter detailing the reasons why we are unable to provide the information requested.

If you are not satisfied with our response to your complaint, you can contact the Information Commissioner. The contact details are:

Information Commissioner  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow

Cheshire  
SK9 5AF  
Telephone: 0303 123 1113  
Website: [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)

You may also wish to contact the Northern Ireland Regional Office –

Information Commissioners Office  
10<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Causeway Tower  
9 James Street South  
Belfast  
BT2 8DN

Telephone: 0303 123 1114  
Email: [ni@ico.org.uk](mailto:ni@ico.org.uk)  
Website: [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk)