



Information Commissioner's Office
Promoting public access to official information
and protecting your personal information

Dear

Freedom of information is changing – are you ready to fulfil your obligation to disclose information?

The Freedom of Information Act is now well into its fourth year of full operation. It has changed the landscape of access to official information across the whole of the public sector. This has presented challenges for some public authorities, but has also led to the disclosure of a significant amount of information to the public which would otherwise have remained secret.

Section 19 of the Act obliges every public authority to adopt an approved Publication Scheme. The intention of a Publication Scheme is to require authorities to make certain kinds of information routinely available to the public.

The approval of all current schemes expires on 31 December 2008. The ICO is refreshing its approach to proactive disclosure of information. Our aim is to encourage maximum disclosure but also to reduce the burden on public authorities. The ICO has therefore approved (under section 20 of the Act) a model scheme which is suitable for every public authority to adopt with effect from 1 January 2009. The Model Scheme has been developed in conjunction with representatives from a wide range of public bodies whose assistance we have much appreciated.

You must ensure that your organisation adopts the model Publication Scheme and puts in place arrangements to publish information in line with that scheme.

The person responsible for freedom of information within your authority should be familiar with the ICO guidance relating to the scheme and may have been involved in the consultation process. The enclosed leaflet provides details of the adoption and enforcement processes, further information and guidance can be found on our website at www.ico.gov.uk

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Richard Thomas'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Richard Thomas
Information Commissioner