



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

Press Release

For immediate release

Date: 13 January 2009

FOI requests from Mickey Mouse and Mrs Sue D. Nym can be refused

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has published new guidance to help public authorities respond to information requests from people using pseudonyms or fictitious names to disguise their real identity.

A minority of requesters using the Freedom of Information Act sometimes use a pseudonym, for example, to avoid the possibility of their request being considered vexatious or repeated. According to the guidance public authorities are entitled to treat a request as invalid, where the real name of the requester has not been used. The ICO itself will not be dealing with complaints that come from known pseudonyms and false names such as Mickey Mouse or Mrs Sue D. Nym.

The guidance urges public authorities to apply common sense. Where an obvious pseudonym is used, it is good practice for the public authority to consider the request as it may be happy to release the information, even though technically the request is invalid. If a public authority chooses not to comply with the request then it should advise the applicant that the Freedom of Information Act requires their real name before the request is deemed valid.

The Assistant Information Commissioner, Gerrard Tracey, said: "Since the Freedom of Information Act came into force four years ago it has encouraged openness and transparency among public authorities. This new guidance aims to help public authorities both comply with the Act and adopt a common sense approach in handling requests."

The ICO has also produced new guidance for public authorities on providing advice and assistance to individuals making requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act and Environmental Information Regulations.

Both pieces of guidance can be downloaded from the [ICO's website](#) or ordered by contacting the ICO on 08456 306 060.

ENDS

If you need more information, please contact the ICO press office on 020 7025 7580 or visit the website at: www.ico.gov.uk

Notes to Editors

1. The Information Commissioner promotes public access to official information and protects personal information. The ICO is an independent body with specific responsibilities set out in the Data Protection Act 1998, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003.
2. For more information about the Information Commissioner's Office subscribe to our e-newsletter at www.ico.gov.uk.