

What is the purpose of the Freedom of Information Act?

The purpose of the Freedom of Information Act is to give the public greater access to information about the workings of government and public bodies. It is to make authorities accountable to the public and enable transparency in the operation of public authorities.

What new rights does the Act create?

The Freedom of Information Act gives two related rights:

- the right to be told whether the information exists, and
- the right to receive the information.

These rights will be subject to exemptions from the Act.

When did the Act come into force?

The Freedom of Information Act came into force on 1 January 2005.

Does the Act only apply to records created from 1 January 2005?

The Freedom of Information Act is fully retrospective which means it applies to all recorded information not just information created after 1 January 2005.

Do I have to pay for any request made under the Act?

Section 13 of the Freedom of Information Act states that a fee may be charged for requests that exceed the appropriate limit. The current regulatory limit has been set by the Secretary of State and currently stands at £450 for public authorities including the police service.

It has been recommended that authorities consider adopting an hourly rate to enable calculation of costs of requests and the Association of Chief Police Officers have approved the hourly rate of £25 per hour. This equates to 18 hours work to fall within the £450 cost limit.

Any request which may take over this prescribed 18 hours, can be refused on the grounds that it would take over this limit.

Will I be able to obtain personal information about myself under the Act?

The Data Protection Act is the correct act to request personal information not the Freedom of Information Act. If you want to apply for your own personal information, it needs to be dealt with by applying under the Data Protection Act via an application under Subject Access.

How do I request information under the Freedom of Information Act?

Visit the 'Request information under the Freedom of Information Act.

Who ensures that South Yorkshire Police complies with the Act?

The Information Commissioner is responsible for ensuring that all public authorities comply with the Act.