

# Freedom of Information

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## Headlines

- ICO updates Records Management Code of Practice, p.17
- Sweden's FOI laws put citizens in danger, say experts, p.19
- Council faces criminal complaint over failure to publish FOI log, p.20

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## “Leaders must take transparency seriously” — Commissioner

The Information Commissioner has [written](#) to senior leaders reminding them that transparency is essential if the people and communities they serve are to have confidence in the way that public services are delivered.

“FOI is a fundamental part of transparency. Getting it wrong can mean additional resources are needed to deal with complaints and appeals about decisions, at a time when services are under sustained pressure and resources are stretched. It is in your interest to get

it right,” wrote John Edwards in an open letter.

“I am calling on you to encourage your staff, whatever their role, to take FOI seriously. You need to dedicate resources to improving access to information and transparency, and ensure you have the right training, processes and culture in place. Your leadership makes a real difference. We recently published case studies that demonstrate how leadership has driven forward an open and transparent culture. I urge you to take a look and challenge yourself to see how your

organisation compares,” he added.

The Commissioner offered some simple steps that leaders can take if they don't know where to start.

Firstly, leaders should know what their authority needs to publish and make as much information publicly available as possible.

Second, they should look at what people are asking their authority about and actively publish that information.

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## ICO acts against five public authorities

The Information Commissioner's Office has [taken action](#) against five public authorities for their continued failings to meet their obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Sussex Police and South Yorkshire Police were issued with Enforcement Notices for their FOI failings. The notices mean that the ICO has now issued a total of nine Enforcement Notices in the last 12 months.

“Sussex Police and South Yorkshire Police have let people down with their woeful failure to comply with the law on responding to information requests. The Commissioner has been clear that public sector leaders should take transparency seriously. Where organisations fail to do this we will take enforcement action so people's information rights are upheld,” said Warren Seddon, ICO Director of Freedom of Information and Transparency.

Both police forces had large backlogs in dealing with FOI requests: 753 for Sussex Police (including 389 over six months old) and 390 for South Yorkshire. Sussex Police had a compliance rate of 32% for the most recent quarter. South Yorkshire Police's compliance rate was under 18% for most of last year, which the Enforcement Notice describes as “unacceptable on any level.”

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