



Department for

Communities

www.communities-ni.gov.uk

Information Charter

May 2016

1. Purpose

This Information Charter sets out the standards that you can expect from the Department for Communities when we request or hold personal information about you. It tells you how you can access your personal data and what you can do if you think that standards are not being met.

2. Personal information

The Data Protection Act 1998 regulates the management of personal information. For these purposes personal information, or 'data', is that which relates to living individuals. It does not apply to information relating to deceased persons or to groups or communities of people. The Department has comprehensive guidance in place to ensure that both the Department and staff meet the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998

3. Privacy Impact Assessment

A Privacy Impact Assessment process has been developed by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) which assists the Department in identifying privacy risks, evaluating proposals to identify the potential effects upon individual privacy and Data Protection compliance.

4. Registration

As a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act, the Department for Communities has registered with the Information Commissioner's Office the purposes for which we process data. These include processing for the purposes of:

- Staff Administration;
- Benefits, Grants and Loans Administration;
- Licensing and Registration;
- Administration of justice;
- Assessment and collection of taxes and other revenue;
- Accounts and Records;
- Accounting and Auditing;
- Crime prevention and prosecution of offenders;
- Information and Databank administration;
- Research;
- Property Management;
- Appointments to Public Bodies;
- Advertising, Marketing and Public Relations;
- Departmental Administration;
- Consultancy and Advisory Services;
- Education;
- Journalism and Media;
- Acquisition and Preservation of Archives;
- Arranging Direct Payment of housing fuel costs;

- Promoting parental responsibility, offering child maintenance options and providing a statutory maintenance service with effective enforcement; and
- Data matching initiatives for the prevention and detection of fraud.

Our registration with the Information Commissioner's Office can be found at its website - www.ico.org.uk. The Department's registration number is Z6973816.

5. Personal Information

When we need to ask you for personal information, for any of the above purposes, we will:

- ensure that you know why we need it; ask only for what is necessary and avoid collecting too much information or data that may be considered irrelevant;
- protect it and make sure no unauthorised person has access to it;
- ensure that your data is not kept longer than is necessary;

In return we ask you to:

- give us accurate information; and
- tell us as soon as possible if there are any changes to your personal circumstances, such as your address. This helps us to keep your information accurate and up-to-date.

You have a right to object to processing of your data if it causes unwarranted and substantial damage or distress. You must explain what processing you want us to stop and why. We will reply within 21 days to let you know what we have done about your request it.

6. More Information

The Charter gives you details to:

- find out what information we hold about you while giving you the right to ask us to correct any mistakes;
- find out about agreements that we have with other organisations for sharing information;
- be informed about the circumstances under which we can pass on personal information without telling you, for example, to help with the prevention or detection of crime, or for the production of anonymised statistics;
- be informed about the instructions we give to staff on how to collect, use or delete your personal information;
- be informed about how we check that the information we hold is accurate and up-to-date; and
- find out how to make a complaint.

For additional enquiries, please contact us by email at DPA@communities-ni.gsi.gov.uk. Alternatively you can write to the address given under "How to request personal information".

7. Fees

If you request your own personal data under the Data Protection Act 1998, this request is known as a 'subject access request' or 'SAR'. The legislation permits Data Controllers to charge a fee of £10.00; however the Department currently does not charge a fee for making a subject access request.

8. Sending out copies of information may be expensive or time consuming

In some cases, dealing with a subject access request will be an onerous task. This might be because of the nature of the request, because of the amount of personal data involved, or because of the way in which certain information is held. If the Department feels that supplying a copy of information in permanent form would involve disproportionate effort, they should still try to comply with the request in some other way for example by allowing the applicant to view the information by visiting the premises.

9. Fees for information in other formats

You can ask for information to be in any reasonable format and in languages other than English but there may be an additional charge for this. We will discuss the likely cost of your request with you so that you can decide if you want to proceed.

If someone else has copyright on the information you want, then you may have to pay them to use it. If so, this cost will be outside our control.

10. Other relevant information

Where the information you are seeking is contained in files that are not appropriately structured or referenced, it may not be easy to locate and to identify whether personal information is held or being used. We keep as little 'unstructured' information as possible, since it is difficult to access and use. If you require access to information held in these 'unstructured' manual files, you should describe the information in a way that would enable us to find it. It will help us to process your subject access request if you can be as specific as possible about what you want

11. How to request personal information

Should you wish to make a subject access request about personal data held by the Department for Communities, you should send it to:

By email: DPA@communities-ni.gsi.gov.uk

Or in writing:

Department for Communities
Information Management Branch
Lighthouse Building
1 Cromac Place
Gasworks Business Park
Belfast
BT7 2JB

When requesting your personal information from the Department, you should include your full name, address and contact telephone number as well as any information used by the

Department to identify or distinguish you from others of the same name (account numbers, unique ID's etc).

Please be specific about the information that you are looking for - it helps us to identify what you require and answer your request more promptly. For example, does a specific date or time period apply? Are there any references you can give that will help us to identify the information - such as the names of a particular working group or task force? How did you find out about the topic or information you are seeking?

While you do not have to explain why you want the information, if you are happy to do this it may help us to answer your request more satisfactorily.

12. Complaints

When we ask you for information, we will keep to the law. If however you consider that your information has been handled incorrectly, you can contact the Information Commissioner for independent advice about data protection, privacy and data sharing issues. You can contact the Information Commissioner at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF
Tel: 01625 545 745
Fax: 01625 524 510
www.ico.gov.uk

or

Information Commissioner's Office
3rd Floor
14 Cromac Place
Belfast
BT7 2JB
Tel: 028 9027 8757