

Access of information

Information about accessing information from the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland.

The following acts of Parliament have created access to information regimes which allow members of the public to ask the Consumer Council for certain types of information:

- Data Protection Act 2018
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Environmental Information Regulations 2004

Your legal rights

You have rights under data protection laws in relation to your personal data. You have the right to ask the Consumer Council whether or not we are using or storing your personal information. You can also ask us for copies of your personal information, verbally or in writing. This is called the right of access and is commonly known as making a subject access request or SAR.

Request access to your personal data (commonly known as a "data subject access request"). This enables you to receive a copy of the personal data we hold about you within one month free of charge (unless the request is unfounded, excessive or repetitive).

No fee usually required

You will not have to pay a fee to access your personal data (or to exercise any of the other rights). However, we may charge a reasonable fee if your request is clearly unfounded, repetitive or excessive. We may also charge a reasonable fee to comply with requests for further copies of the same information. The fee will be based on the administrative costs of providing the information.

What we may need from you

We may need to request specific information from you to help us confirm your identity and ensure your right to access your personal data (or to exercise any of your other rights). This is a security measure to ensure that personal data is not disclosed to any person who has no right to receive it.

Time limit to respond

In accordance with UK GDPR guidelines we will respond within one month.

- **Request correction of the personal data that we hold about you.** This enables you to have any incomplete or inaccurate data we hold about you corrected, though we may need to verify the accuracy of the new data you provide to us.
- **Request erasure of your personal data.** This enables you to ask us to delete or remove personal data where there is no good reason for us continuing to process it. You also have the right to ask us to delete or remove your personal data where you have successfully exercised your right to object to processing, where we may have processed your information unlawfully or where we are

required to erase your personal data to comply with the law. Note, however, that we may not always be able to comply with your request of erasure for specific legal reasons which will be notified to you, if applicable, at the time of your request. Please note that retention requirements supersede any right to erasure requests under applicable data protection laws.

- **Object to processing of your personal data.** This is in situations where we are performing our official function (e.g. dealing with a complaint on your behalf) and there is something about your particular situation which makes you want to object to processing on this ground as you feel it impacts on your fundamental rights and freedoms.
- If you object to the processing of certain data then we may not be able to provide the Consumer Council services or it may restrict our ability to achieve a positive outcome on your behalf.
- **Request restriction of processing of your personal data.** This enables you to ask us to suspend the processing of your personal data in the following scenarios: (a) if you want us to establish the data's accuracy; (b) where our use of the data is unlawful but you do not want us to erase it; (c) you have objected to our use of your data but we need to verify whether we have overriding legitimate grounds to use it. Please note that any requests in relation to the restriction of the processing of your data means that we may not be able to perform the services that you require from the Consumer Council.
- **Request the transfer of your personal data to you or to a third party.** We will provide to you, your personal data in a structured, commonly used format, which you can then transfer to an applicable third party.
- **Withdraw consent at any time where we are relying on consent to process your personal data.** However, this will not affect the lawfulness of any processing carried out before you withdraw your consent. If you withdraw your consent, we may not be able to provide the Consumer Council services to you. We will advise you if this is the case at the time you withdraw your consent.

Changes to privacy policy

If we change our Privacy Notice or our Privacy Policy we will tell you. This will be via messages on our website, via our email signatures and via the pre-recorded messages on our telephone systems.

Links to other websites

This privacy notice does not cover links to other websites. We encourage you to read the privacy statements on the other websites you visit.

Contact

Public authorities are obliged to publish certain information about their activities.

All questions relating to data and your privacy are welcomed and should be addressed to our support team. If you have any questions, comments or requests regarding this privacy policy, please contact us through the following details:

Email: dpo@consumercouncil.org.uk

Telephone: 028 9025 1600

Write to: Data Protection Officer, The Consumer Council, 3rd Floor, Seatem House, 28-32 Alfred Street, Belfast, BT2 8EN

Freedom of Information Requests

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000 provides public access to information held by public authorities including the Consumer Council. It does this in two ways:

1. Public authorities are obliged to publish certain information about their activities.
2. Members of the public are entitled to request information from public authorities.

The Consumer Council has two separate duties when responding to requests for information:

1. To tell the applicant whether the Consumer Council holds any information falling within the scope of their request; and
2. To provide that information unless it is exempt from disclosure.

The Act covers any recorded information that is held by the Consumer Council that is not environmental information or personal information.

How to make a Freedom of Information Request

Your request must:

- Be in writing (this includes letter, fax or email);
- State your name and an address for correspondence; and
- Describe the information you require.

Define your request as clearly as possible, including, for example, any dates or timescales that may help identify relevant records. Please also include a daytime contact telephone number, if possible, as we may need to contact you to clarify details of your request.

You can make a request via email to info@consumercouncil.org.uk, via fax to 028 9025 1663 or alternatively you can write to the following address:

The Consumer Council

Floor 3 Seatem House

28-32 Alfred Street

Belfast

BT2 8EN

Information Exemptions

Whilst the FOIA creates a right to access information, it also recognises that certain types of information may need to be protected from disclosure by defining a number of exemptions. This means that we may need to withhold some information requested. Exemptions fall into two categories, absolute and qualified and are defined under the FOIA Part II Exempt Information.

Costs for Requests

We will not charge if the cost of locating, retrieving and extracting the information you request is less than the "appropriate limit", which is currently set at £600.

Where the estimated cost of providing information exceeds £600, the Consumer Council is not obliged to proceed with the request. However we may be able to provide some of the information requested if it can be supplied within the "appropriate limit" and in these circumstances we will contact you and assist you in redefining your request.

Timescale for Responses to FOI Requests

We will aim to respond to any requests promptly and no later than the 20th working day following the date of receipt.

If the requested information is subject to a qualified exemption, and we need more time to assess public interest considerations relating to disclosure, we will write to you within the 20 working days to tell you when we estimate we will be able to provide a final response to your request.

If we do not hold the information requested we will contact you and advise, if known, if there are any other public authorities to assist.

Refusal of a Request

We are not obliged to comply with a request for information if the cost of complying with the request would exceed the appropriate limit.

If we refuse a request or you are unhappy with the response, we will provide details on how to ask for an internal review of our decision. If you remain dissatisfied you have the right to complain to the ICO.

Request Limitations

The FOIA does not specifically limit the number of requests you can make; however, it does give us the right to refuse vexatious or repeated requests. Where a number of requests have been received from an individual for the same or similar information, we are also allowed to aggregate the costs of these in estimating whether or not the appropriate limit would be exceeded.

Environmental Information Regulations 2004

The Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) 2004 provide a similar access regime for environmental information to that above:

1. Public authorities must make environmental information available proactively;
and
2. Members of the public are entitled to request environmental information from public authorities.

Requests can be orally or in writing and we will seek to provide the information within 20 working days of receiving the request.

Publication scheme

View our publication scheme ([link to document](#)).