

Dyfed Powys Police

Freedom of Information audit report

November 2023

Executive summary



Audit Methodology

The Information Commissioner is responsible for enforcing and promoting compliance with data protection legislation, as well as the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR). Section 47 of the FOIA provides provision for the Commissioner to assess whether a public authority is following good practice, including compliance with the requirements of this Act and the provisions of the codes of practice under sections 45 and 46. The ICO sees auditing as a constructive process with real benefits for controllers and so aims to establish a participative approach.

The purpose of the audit is to provide the Information Commissioner and Dyfed Powys Police (DPP) with an independent assurance of the extent to which the information handling practices of DPP, within the scope of this agreed audit, conform with the codes of practice under sections 45 and 46 of the FOIA.

DPP agreed to a consensual audit by the ICO of its compliance with the FOIA.

It was agreed that the audit would focus on the following area:

Scope area	Description
Freedom of Information (FOI)	The extent to which FOI/EIR accountability, policies and procedures, performance measurement controls, and reporting mechanisms to monitor compliance are in place and in operation throughout the organisation.

Audits are conducted following the Information Commissioner’s audit methodology. The key elements of this are a desk-based review of selected policies and procedures, remote interviews with selected staff, and a virtual review of evidential documentation.

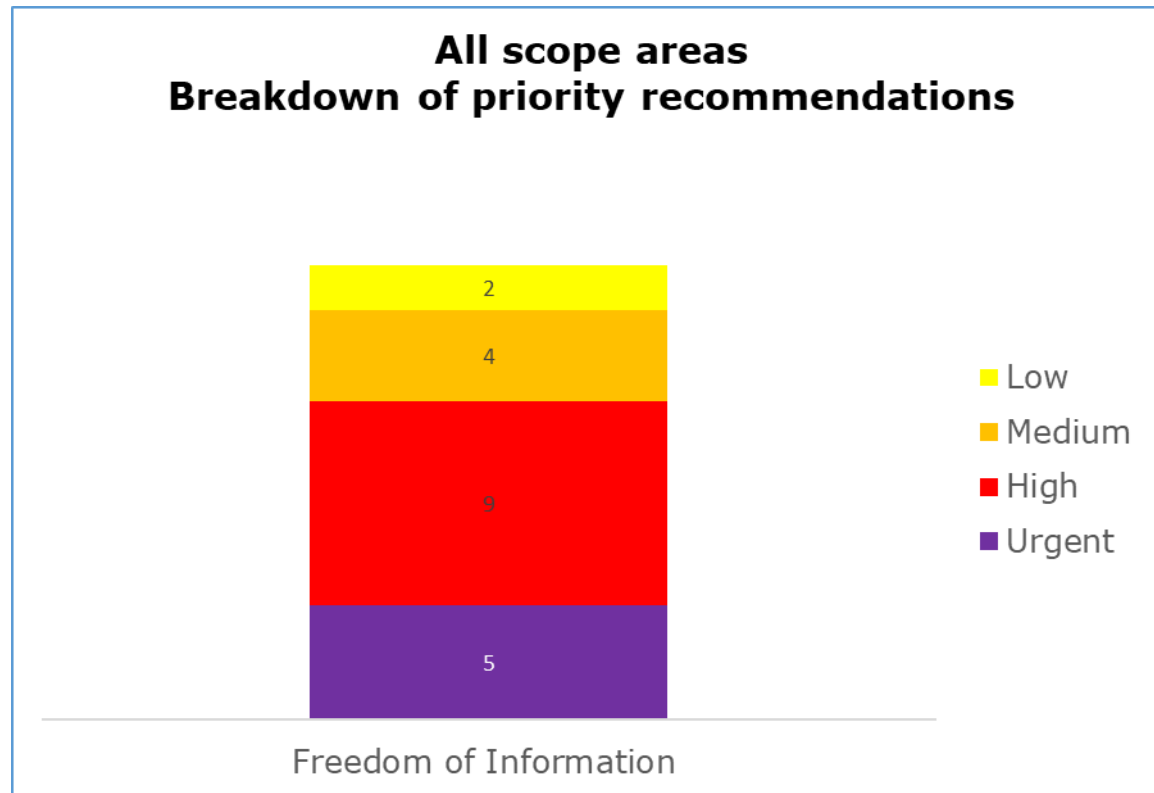
Where weaknesses were identified recommendations have been made, primarily around enhancing existing processes to facilitate compliance with freedom of information legislation. In order to assist DPP in implementing the recommendations each has been assigned a priority rating based upon the risks that they are intended to address. The ratings are assigned based upon the ICO’s assessment of the risks involved. DPP’s priorities and risk appetite may vary and, therefore, they should undertake their own assessments of the risks identified.

Audit Summary

Audit Scope area	Assurance Rating	Overall Opinion
Freedom of Information (FOI)	Limited	There is a limited level of assurance that processes and procedures are in place and are delivering freedom of information compliance. The audit has identified considerable scope for improvement in existing arrangements to reduce the risk of non-compliance with freedom of information legislation.

*The assurance ratings above are reflective of the remote audit methodology deployed and the rating may not necessarily represent a comprehensive assessment of compliance.

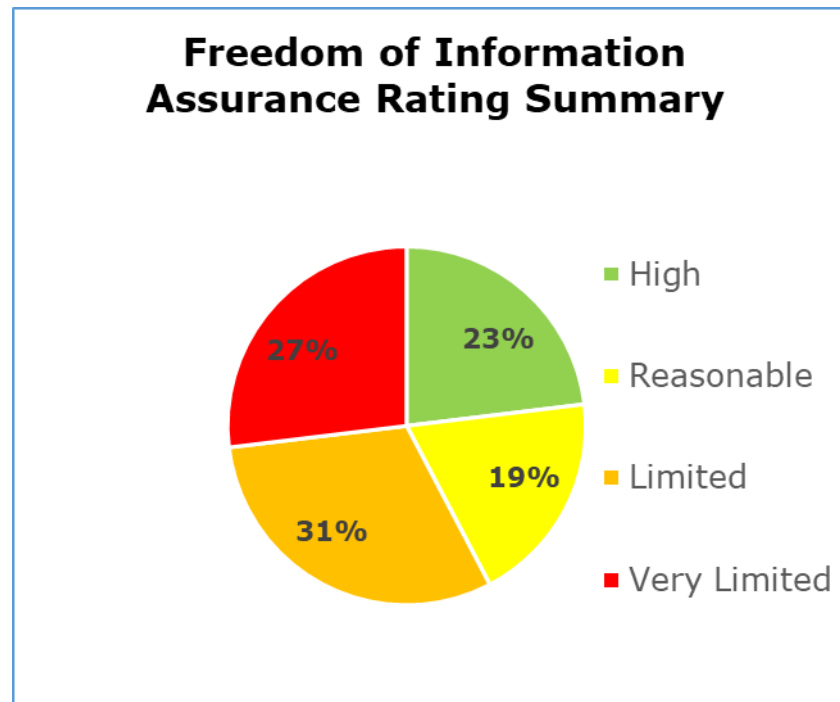
Priority Recommendations



The bar chart above shows a breakdown of the priorities assigned to our recommendations made:

- There were 5 urgent, 9 high, 4 medium and 2 low priority recommendations.

Graphs and Charts



The pie chart above shows a summary of the assurance ratings awarded. 23% high assurance, 19% reasonable assurance, 31% limited assurance, 27% very limited assurance.

Areas for Improvement

- DPP is not currently meeting the statutory timescales for responding to FOI requests. To mitigate the backlog, DPP is reaching out to individuals for overdue requests to determine whether these are still required, and closing cases where it does not receive a response. This is non-compliant with the FOI legislation.
- DPP has faced several resourcing challenges, which it is still working to mitigate. It has now established a Gold Group to monitor this, and should continue work to ensure there are sufficient resources in place to allow responses to be provided within the statutory timescales.
- DPP currently has a publication scheme on its website, however, due to resources, this is not being followed. DPP should review its publication scheme and work to ensure relevant information is proactively published.
- FOI awareness is not sufficiently included in all staff training, and DPP does not currently have a way to monitor staff have read and understood policies and procedures.
- Whilst there is a quality assurance process in place for new FOI handlers, there is currently no QA process for more experienced staff. Dip-sampling of completed cases takes place but is not regular or documented.

Disclaimer

The matters arising in this report are only those that came to our attention during the course of the audit and are not necessarily a comprehensive statement of all the areas requiring improvement.

The responsibility for ensuring that there are adequate risk management, governance and internal control arrangements in place rest with the management of Dyfed Powys Police.

We take all reasonable care to ensure that our audit report is fair and accurate but cannot accept any liability to any person or organisation, including any third party, for any loss or damage suffered or costs incurred by it arising out of, or in connection with, the use of this report, however such loss or damage is caused. We cannot accept liability for loss occasioned to any person or organisation, including any third party, acting or refraining from acting as a result of any information contained in this report.

This report is an exception report and is solely for the use of Dyfed Powys Police. The scope areas and controls covered by the audit have been tailored to Dyfed Powys Police and, as a result, the audit report is not intended to be used in comparison with other ICO audit reports.