

News release

23 June 2011

Government departments commit to improve FOI response times

The Cabinet Office, the Ministry of Defence and Birmingham City Council have made a commitment to improve the time they take to respond to FOI requests, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) said today. All three public authorities have signed undertakings committing them to putting changes in place. Failure to comply with the terms of the undertaking could result in formal regulatory action.

Information Commissioner, Christopher Graham, said:

"We've now had written assurances that a clear plan of action will be put in place by the public authorities that caused us most concern. I'm satisfied that this will now happen but do not rule out taking further action if needed.

"Timely responses to initial requests are key to an effective access to information regime. These firm commitments to improvement are very welcome. We are seeing good results from the ICO's monitoring exercise and it's essential that the improving trend continues."

The ICO monitored the performance of 33 public authorities for a period of three months, following concerns about delays in their responses to FOI requests. Of the 33 authorities, the ICO has required a total of seven organisations to make improvements. In May, undertakings were agreed

with the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, the London Borough of Islington, and Westminster City Council. Earlier this month, Wolverhampton City Council also agreed to an undertaking.

Full copies of all of the undertakings can be viewed here:

http://www.ico.gov.uk/what_we_cover/promoting_openness/taking_action.aspx#undertakings

The ICO is currently monitoring the performance of another set of public authorities after concerns were raised about delays in responding to FOI requests. The list of public authorities being monitored is available on the ICO website here:

http://www.ico.gov.uk/what_we_cover/promoting_openness/monitoring_compliance.aspx

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If you need more information, please contact the ICO press office on 0303 123 9070 or visit the website at: www.ico.gov.uk.

Notes to Editors

1. The [list](#) of public authorities being monitored from 1 April to 30 June is available on the ICO website.
2. The [list](#) of public authorities that were monitored from 1 October to 31 December 2010 is available on the ICO website.
3. More information on the [monitoring compliance](#) program is also available on the ICO website.
4. The Information Commissioner's Office upholds information rights in the public interest, promoting openness by public bodies and data privacy for individuals.
5. The ICO has specific responsibilities set out in the Data Protection Act 1998, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003.
6. The ICO is on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#), and produces a monthly [e-newsletter](#). Our [For the media](#) page provides more information for journalists.

7. The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) provides individuals or organisations with the right to request official information held by a public authority. The Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) provide access to environmental information. The ICO's policy on enforcing public access to official information and the powers at its disposal are set out [here](#).