# Freedom of Information

# Delivering ICO25

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# Plan for today

**Casework Context** 

**Delivering ICO25** 

Statutory & Upstream regulation



# Casework Context



# **Casework Context**

#### **Pre Pandemic**

- Intake around 6-6.5k up from just under 5k in 2015 – but clearing volume through increased efficiency/reducing non-casework activity
- Avg caseload at year end usually around 1250 by 2019-20
- Delivering over 1400 Decision Notices per year
- Comfortably achieving KPIs (80% closed in 6 months, less than 1% over 1 year old)
- Limited flexibility on resource, can't cross subsidise Grant-In-Aid with fee income

#### Post Pandemic, spring 2022

- Intake down by 10% on forecast, which has helped, but fairly stable in historic terms
- Caseload at year end over 2200, plus increased complexity as quick wins have been identified and closed via early resolution
- Back to pre-pandemic productivity, delivering over 1400 Decision Notices per year and clearing annual intake, but not making inroads into the queue
- KPIs well below target (less than 70% in 6 months, around 10% of cases over 1 year)

# Delivering ICO25



# Better FOI Programme – delivering ICO25

Aim: to (1) clear backlog and (2) transform service delivery beyond pre-pandemic levels improving performance for citizens in line with ICO25 objectives

1

# Better efficiency & innovation

Exploring new ways to transform delivery of our service, including digitally and how we deliver our decision and enforcement 'products' 2

## Better upstream

Delivering more support for public bodies to improve their performance and reduce complaints to our office, as well as how we can support requestors make better targeted requests.

3

## Better regulation

**Exploring** how we can use the statutory framework to better target resources on the most significant cases and support our staff in delivering case outcomes as quickly as possible.

4

#### **Better Legal**

Examining
how we can
make our
approach to
handling
appeals to
the First Tier
Tribunal
more efficient

5

### Better comms

Exploring
how we can
use 'earned
media' and
our own
organic
reach to
raise the
profile of our
FOI work

6

## Better data

Making sure we are collecting the right data from our casework and other sources so that it is properly informing our approach.

7

## Better service

Clearing our backlog by March 2023 in line with commitment made in ICO25 to return to our published service levels



# Where we are now

#### What we have done in the operation

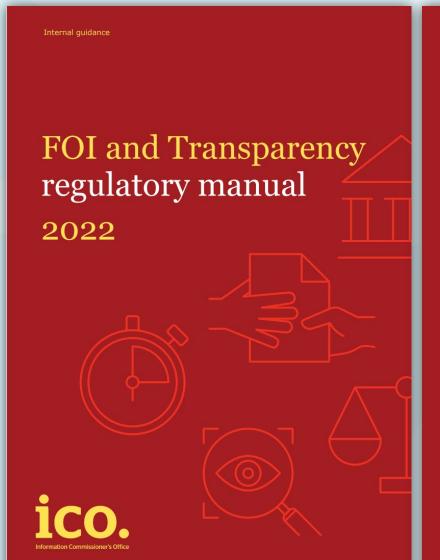
- Recruited 8 new staff (funding until September '23 so down to 6 in practice as we manage through attrition)
- Since October have 'super charged' our process changes to increase output
- Streamlined our front-end system and templates to gather the case info we need as soon as we can
- Increased allocation levels (more than doubled)
- Simultaneously empowered staff to use new approaches to close cases inc. decisions without further enquiries, short DNs, reduced management review, more early resolution
- Stronger, consistent deadlines for any further information from Public Authorities

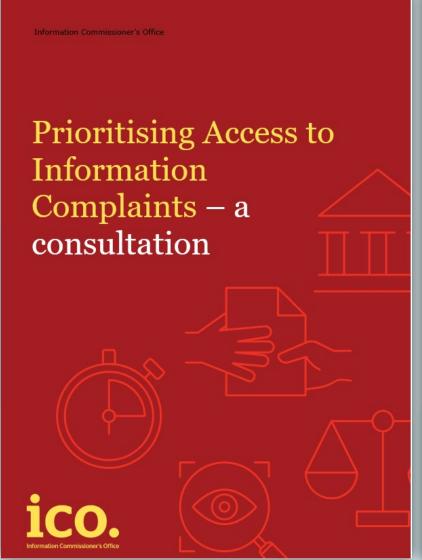
#### What the data is telling us

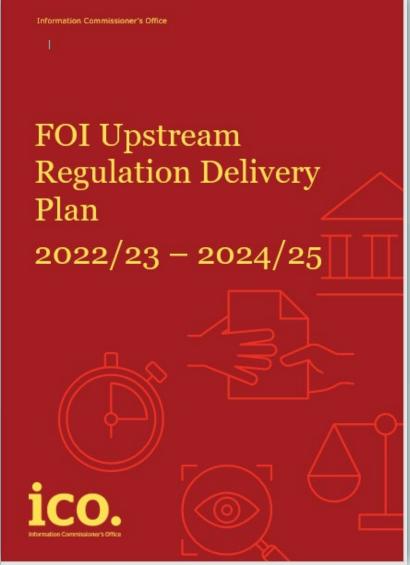
- Intake is down from our forecast (around 10%),
   while productivity is significantly up
- In Q1/Q2 this year DN output already at record levels, we averaged around 155 per month (which would have put us on track for a record year)
- In October, following the new operational measures, this increased to 308 DNs, with momentum carrying through into November
- On 14 November we reached 1411 DNs, the same DN output as our total in 2021/22
- Caseload by 17 November stood at 1593, well ontrack to deliver ICO25 objectives, although risks remain (increased intake, staff attrition/sickness etc)

# Statutory and Upstream Regulation











# Where we are now

#### **Monitoring & Enforcement activity**

- Currently in pilot phase on new manual, delivering from within existing resources
- New monthly challenge meetings to review our monitoring activity and agree next steps/action to take
- Issued first Enforcement Notice for 7 years on Department for International Trade, complied with.
- Issued multiple Practice Recommendations, all of which seem to be having the impact we want
- More activity likely before end of pilot based on current monitoring

#### **Upstream Activity**

- Aim is to improve PA performance, reduce the need for complaints and support citizens to get access to the information they need.
- Recruited new team over summer, all now in post
- Procured research to inform our work
- Working with key stakeholders (MySociety, Campaign for FOI) as part of work
- Developing a suite of tools, including model action plans, expanded FOI Toolkits, digitisation of training
- Developing FOI offering as part of wider ICO digital transformation work