Promoting openness
Freedom of information tips for communications professionals

- Build freedom of information into communication plans. Consider "What would be released under freedom of information?"
- Get to know your freedom of information officer, so you know what kind of requests are being made of your organisation.
- Prepare additional information to supply useful context where necessary.
- Check freedom of information requests regularly to identify what's interesting your stakeholders, and who they are. If you spot a trend, make the information available on your website and update your organisation's publication scheme. Consider making a feature of regular or growing topics for request.
- Work closely with your freedom of information officer to ensure your website offers the right information, and that it's up to date and easily accessible.
- Coordinate freedom of information work with media enquiries, Parliamentary Questions and blog monitoring - they often cover similar issues at the same time.
- Ring journalists when they've made a freedom of information request. Junior journalists often make a request instead of going to the press office - offering help can be beneficial to both parties.

- Vague or poorly worded questions don't make good or accurate stories – remember the Act requires you to give help and assistance.

- Consider how the information might be released. For example, will you release the information on your website as soon as you get the request, or manage the story through the journalist who requested it?

- The Act is retrospective: consider the skeletons in your organisation's cupboard - make it part of your risk assessment process, and identify mitigating actions.

- Include freedom of information performance in your Annual Report and corporate audit schedule.

- Keep your files up to date, tidy and easy to access; stick to your retention schedules, and weed your files out regularly. It makes responding to requests much easier.

- Train your staff in good records management and in email writing and note taking skills.

- Have a contingency plan - your organisation may not want to release the information, but you may be ordered to release it. Consider how you'll handle it.

- Read our [freedom of information](#) pages for more information. Sign up to our [e-newsletter](#) and our twitter feed [@ICOnews](#).

- Check out websites and blogs that cover freedom of information issues, such as www.whatdotheyknow.com, www.openrightsgroup.org, the UK freedom of information blog at http://foia.blogspot.com and the Campaign for Freedom of Information at www.cfoi.org.uk.