Incoming Emails - Information Requests

Only valid information requests that cannot be handled as normal course of business should be handled by IA.

Requests can come via a number of different avenues, which include:

- Via WhatDoTheyKnow, a website which lists all UK public authorities which can respond to an FOI request. These requests always come via the ICE email queue, not to the main inbox.
- An email from Comms detailing a request made on social media. These can be made via X (formerly Twitter) Facebook or LinkedIn.

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Disclosure Log Submission Requests

Emails received in the IA inbox with the subject line 'Disclosure Log Submission Form' should be automatically be transferred to the IA inbox sub-folder of the same name. The IASO is responsible for checking this folder and sending all requests that need to be added to the Disclosure Log to Comms weekly. See the Disclosure Log Process for more information.

The Disclosure Log folder in Outlook should be checked regularly so that any emails marked as urgent are not missed. These could include disclosures that need to be added to the Disclosure Log the same day as we need to issue a social media response. See the Disclosure Log Process for how to get the entry added to the Disclosure Log. See also the IAT Social Media procedure for how to arrange for Comms to issue a reply to a request received via social media.

If you see an email in the IA inbox with the subject line 'Disclosure Log Submission Form' please drag it to the correct folder. Please don't copy it to the sub-folder, drag it instead so it no longer appears in the IA Inbox.

Social Media Requests

The ICO Comms team will make IA aware if a social media request is received. Establish if the new request assigned to IA is a valid information request, and not a SAR. If it is not a valid request for recorded information, you will need to make Comms aware so they can reassign it. If the request is valid but a real name has not been provided, treat this as a valid request. The request handler will contact the requester to obtain a real name. If it is a request for IA to handle, forward this in to ICE in the usual way.

Once the case has been set up in ICE the IASO should notify Comms and arrange for an acknowledgment to be sent. Please see the Information Access Social Media request procedure for more information.

Hootsuite

Hootsuite is a platform for managing multiple social media accounts. ICO uses this platform to manage its social media channels. It can be used to 'assign' content, such as a Tweet we have received, to a specific part of the business for them to action e.g. if ICO receives a Tweet that contains an information request, it will be assigned to IA.

IASO Role

The IASO's role is to ensure requests made via social media are processed. If an information request is received via social media the ICO Comms team will assign this to the IA team in Hootsuite. This will generate an alert email that will be sent to accessicoinformation@ico.org.uk. The IASO should also check Hootsuite regularly to ensure no assignments have been missed.

If a message assigned to IA in Hootsuite does contain an information request, this needs to be sent to the IR queue in ICE to be set up as a request case.

If a message assigned to IA in Hootsuite does not contain an information request, then the message needs to be reassigned to Comms with an explanatory note of why it is not an information request.

The IASO should also log in to Hootsuite regularly to 'resolve' requests that have received a response, thus removing them from our Hootsuite inbox.

See the IA post instructions in Post Resources - All Documents in the Sharepoint EDRM.

Information Access Social Media request procedure

Requests made via social media are no different from any other written information request we receive, aside from the practicalities of dealing with them. This procedure explains how we approach such requests.

Referrals from Comms

Colleagues from our Communications Directorate monitor social media channels, referring specific queries or requests to the appropriate internal department for response.

Initial triage

Comms will email any requests directly to the Information Access Inbox. The post handler will make an initial assessment of the request. They will knock back any SARs, any requests that can be handled as normal course of business, or invalid FOIs.

Handling a request from social media

The post handler should set the case up in ICE 360 following the normal ICE case handling procedure. If a new contact record needs to be created the requester's Twitter handle should be added in the address field of the Contact record.

Once the case has been set up the post handler(O should arrange for an acknowledgement of the request to be sent via social media. This should be done via Comms. Contact details for Comms can be found at the bottom of this page. Please copy in all four contacts when asking for the acknowledgment to be sent:

> *As this request is for recorded information we may hold it has been passed to our Information Access Team. They will consider under [FOIA/EIR] and aim to respond within 20 working days. The reference number for the request is IC-xxxx-xxxx.*

Once the request has been dealt with an anonymised response to the request should be prepared in PDF format. The response, and any accompanying disclosures, should then be uploaded to our Disclosure Log by following the Disclosure Log Process.

Once the response has been added to the Disclosure Log a response needs to be issued via social media. Comms will issue the response on behalf of IA. Ensure you make Comms aware of the requesters details and when the request was received to ensure that they reply to the correct post:

> *This request was handled under the [FOIA/EIR] and the response from our Information Access Team is now available on our disclosure log at: [link]*

Further suggestions

- Wherever appropriate, get your tweets double checked by someone else before pressing send.
- Wherever possible, stick to one tweet, avoiding multiple messages that might be taken out of context.
- Any queries about how to phrase a tweet please ask the press team.

Contact details for Comms:

- Kate Banks, Rachel Adams, Steven Linzell, Lisa Tighe.

Disclosure log process

- Our criteria for what should go on the DL is available here.

- Request handler completes all FOIA requests by drafting an anonymous response to the request. i.e. PDF to contain no personal data of the requester. Template for this in 'Team resources'- 'ICE 360 support files' on EDRM.

- PDF response uploaded to documents section of the case on ICE360 and attached to the response email which will include the requester's name (some request handlers will already respond to requests in this way, some will draft in Notepad. This approach requires all request handlers to create their responses in PDF format and attach them as described above.)

- Request handler closes the case, completing all relevant sections of the ICE case record, including ticking the box for 'Proactive Disclosure'.

- Request handler to email the Information Access Inbox using the Disclosure Log Submission Form, attaching a copy of the response PDF and also any disclosure documents.

- The IASO should check the Disclosure Log Submission form folder in Outlook and forward any non-urgent entries to Website Updates weekly. The IASO should compile the requests on the Disclosure Log Submissions tracker, attaching all .PDFs and any .CSV files to the email.

- Once the tracker has been sent to Website Updates the IASO should fill out the Disclosure Log Progress Record on EDRM to reflect that the entry has been sent to Website Updates. The IASO should monitor the Disclosure log for the entry being added and copy the link for the entry to the tracker. Entries are usually added within 4/5 days. There is no need for request documents to be saved to EDRM.

- If the submission needs to be uploaded urgently, the request handler should mark the email as urgent, and add the word URGENT to the start of the email subject. The request handler should also make the IASO aware that an urgent entry has been sent to the inbox. The request handler should where possible let the

IASO know an urgent response is due in advance so they can make comms aware.

- The IASO should check the folder regularly for any urgent submissions. If a submission is marked as urgent, the IASO should prioritise this and send it to Website Updates, asking them to upload the request by the due date, so that IA can issue a response. The Disclosure Log Submissions tracker does not need to be used for urgent entries, but the entry should still be added to the Disclosure Log Progress Record to enable to IA team to track volumes added to the Disclosure log. The email sent by the request handler can be forwarded to Website Updates. If a timely response is not received from Website Updates, Katie Makepeace-Warne can be contacted for assistance in getting the entry added. If you make Website Updates aware that a social media response needs to be sent, they will forward the request to Comms after adding it to the Disclosure log. Ensure you ask to be copied in to all responses so you can check that Comms have issued a reply.

- IASO to provide monthly report to IAT re: entries that have been added to the DL. This will include the case references and short summaries for each response that has gone on the DL that month.