

# How do we communicate?

## ICO communications policy

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## Mission

The ICO's mission is to uphold information rights in the public interest, promoting openness by public bodies and data privacy for individuals.

## Vision

By 2012, we will be recognised by our stakeholders as the authoritative arbiter of information rights, delivering high-quality, relevant and timely outcomes, responsive and outward-looking in our approach, and with committed and high-performing staff – a model of good regulation and a great place to work and develop.

## Values

We are:

### **Committed**

- We care about upholding information rights

### **Team workers**

- We work together as one ICO team, sharing information and expertise

### **Focused**

- We give priority to activities that make the biggest contribution to achieving our mission

### **Effective**

- We work productively and efficiently to produce high quality and timely outcomes, offering best value for customers and citizens

### **A model of best practice**

- We do not ask others to do what we are not prepared to do ourselves

### **Alert**

- We are alert to the perspectives and needs of all our stakeholders – and to the potential impact of new developments in our business

### **Fair**

- We treat everybody we deal with fairly and with integrity and respect.
- We are inclusive in our approach

### **Always learning**

- We are always learning and developing professionally.

# ICO communications policy

## 1 Introduction

In our Vision, we state that the ICO's desired position is to be recognised as the authoritative arbiter of information rights. We also aim to be recognised as an organisation which delivers high-quality, relevant and timely outcomes, and one which takes a responsive and outward-looking approach. Our values state that we will treat everyone fairly and with respect, and that we will be inclusive in our approach.

By adhering to this communications policy, we will ensure that the aims in our Vision and values are reflected in the way the ICO communicates.

This policy is an update of the ICO's previous communications policy, "Our communications commitment", which was published in the ICO's Communications and External Relations Strategy 2009-12. While aimed at ICO staff, it is also published on our website so our customers and stakeholders can see it.

In this document, the term communication is used to cover all written and published materials, as well as oral and face to face communication by ICO staff.

## 2 The policy

### 2.1 What good communication means to the ICO

- Good communication is essential to deliver our Corporate Plan.
- Good communication is defined as two-way, appropriate to the audience, medium and message, and is in correct, clear language.
- Good communication is honest, relevant, timely, appropriate, useful, inclusive and authoritative.
- Good communication can also be persuasive.
- Good communication is tailored to suit the audience.

### 2.2 What the ICO will do

Where appropriate, relevant and proportionate, we will:

- Research opinions of our communication and measure its effectiveness.
- Consult with our customers and stakeholders (for example, on significant matters of policy, or changes to the way we do things).
- Follow the government Code of Practice for Public Consultation and other relevant guidance.
- Adopt house style guides covering corporate identity and written style of published communications.
- Consider the environmental impact of our corporate identity guidelines (eg paper use, ink etc).
- Reflect our legal and moral responsibility by making materials accessible and available.

- Promote equal opportunities in our communications.
- Distribute the information appropriately.
- Involve our offices in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to ensure communications are suitable for devolved governance.

## 2.3 How we will implement this policy

- The Executive Team is responsible for ensuring good communication is championed and implemented in each directorate.
- Staff will be made aware of their communications obligations.
- Good communication will be considered as an aspect of performance assessment.
- We will support this strategy with training, and relevant policies and procedures.
- ICO projects, initiatives and plans will include communications considerations.

## 3 The detail

### 3.1 Charges

- We may seek the Secretary of State's permission to charge for some items (for example, we may charge for bulk print demands).

### 3.2 Accessibility

- The ICO's main language is English. We will adhere to the ICO's Welsh language Scheme. Material in other languages will be published in accordance with our translation policy.
- We will make our publications available in some other languages and accessible formats on request, in line with our Disability Equality Scheme.
- We will produce some documents in easy read format.
- We will ensure our website is accessible in line with government standards.
- We will publish most of our materials, and any available translations, on our website.
- We acknowledge that printed materials will still be required for at least another 20 years, and although we intend to make good use of new technology to improve our communications, we will be mindful of the digital divide and seek to ensure all citizens are able to receive our information and participate offline where appropriate.

### 3.3 Audiences

The ICO's audiences fall into four broad categories:

- ICO staff, potential staff and suppliers.
- Individuals (ie people with information rights; also called consumers, customers, individuals, the public or citizens)
- Practitioners (ie people whose role, or part of whose role, is to ensure data protection and freedom of information laws are observed; also called data protection officers and freedom of information officers)
- Stakeholders (organisations or groups affected by, or having an interest in, our operations, or able to influence other groups; this includes intermediary bodies and our international counterparts).

These groups can be broken down into sub-categories for specific purposes such as campaigns or targeted messages. Notable groups include:

- People and organisations who use our helpline, advice and complaints services
- organisations which notify with us under the Data Protection Act or are subject to the Freedom of Information Act
- ICO website users.

### 3.4 Communication channels

This is not an exhaustive list, but it indicates the main methods we use to get information and messages to our audiences:

<b>Audience</b>	<b>Key channels to reach them</b>
<b>Staff</b>	In-house magazine (Informer) Intranet (ICON) Briefing sessions (ICONNECT) Managers' briefs Team meetings Publications

	Key messages from committees/projects Notice boards/posters etc Workshops, consultation sessions etc Corporate calendar Commissioner's blog
<b>Individuals</b>	Media Publications Website Online eg via Google, news etc Campaigns (using multiple media) Advertising
<b>Practitioners</b>	Media Guidance/publications/training DVDs Website Online eg twitter E-newsletter Speaking engagements ICO and other events/conferences/exhibitions Meetings Direct mail Advertising Consultations
<b>Stakeholder organisations</b>	Media Publications E-newsletter Online eg twitter Speaking engagements ICO and other events/conferences/exhibitions Meetings Website Direct mail Proactive FOI disclosures Consultations

Online communications and media relations are our priority communication channels. Both are mass, instant and influential, and we cannot choose whether to have a media or web presence, only whether to manage or influence them actively or not.

### 3.5 Creative treatment

- Branding and creative work must support our vision, mission and values. The ICO's corporate identity will apply to all

- Our written style and language will be suitable for the medium and the audience, with the emphasis on plain language. The ICO Style Guide will be adhered to in all published materials.
- Our materials will reflect society and will not exclude specific groups: they will have inclusive style and imagery.

### 3.6 Distribution

- We use search engine optimisation to ensure our website is easy to find.
- We have reciprocal website links with appropriate organisations and contribute content to other relevant sites such as [www.directgov.gov.uk](http://www.directgov.gov.uk) and [www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk).
- We distribute our news releases to a broad circulation list to be inclusive of diverse audiences; we also use online media and social networking.
- We aim to reach hard to reach audiences (such as C2DEs and young people) particularly via tabloids, consumer media, with human interest stories, and via online platforms.
- We prioritise speaking engagements according to our corporate aims. Demand outstrips our ability to supply speakers and we aim to make best use of staff time.
- We promote our publications via media relations, especially in the trade and consumer media, on our website and those of other organisations, in our e-newsletter, and with some advertising.
- We distribute our most popular leaflets via the Citizens Advice Bureau and other key intermediaries. We monitor requests for publications to check popularity, frequency and volumes.

- Advertising slots are bought using available research on our target markets. Free-to-air broadcast slots are sought.
- We distribute publications, e-newsletter, training materials and other information of interest direct to stakeholders.

### 3.7 Standard communications activity

This is not an exhaustive list of all possible communications activity undertaken by the ICO. It lists the standard communications activities and techniques we regularly employ:

- Proactive promotion of new guidance, publications, conference, events etc
- Publicity of enforcement activity and decision notices (see separate policy on communicating enforcement activity)
- Rebuttal of myths and inaccuracies
- Support for national and international events such as the European Data Protection Day and International Right to Know Day
- Flagship events eg Annual Report, conferences
- Flagship publications eg Annual Report
- Conduct (and sometimes report on) regular market research surveys and analysis of website use, publication requests etc
- Report on ICO productivity
- Report on information rights performance of other organisations.