

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)

Decision notice

Date: 14 December 2018

Public Authority: Care Quality Commission
Address: Citigate
Gallowgate
Newcastle Upon Tyne
NE1 4PA

Decision (including any steps ordered)

1. The complainant requested information from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) about minutes of meetings from the CQC Expert by Experience Programme Board.
2. The Commissioner's decision is that the CQC has breached section 10(1) of the FOIA in that it failed to provide a valid response to the request within the statutory time frame of 20 working days.
3. The Commissioner requires the CQC to take the following steps to ensure compliance with the legislation.
 - Respond to the complainant's request in accordance with the FOIA
4. The CQC must take these steps within 35 calendar days of the date of this decision notice. Failure to comply may result in the Commissioner making written certification of this fact to the High Court pursuant to section 54 of the Act and may be dealt with as a contempt of court.

Request and response

5. On 19 September 2018, the complainant wrote to the CQC and requested information in the following terms:

"Please can you send me all the minutes from all of the meetings of the CQC Expert by Experience Programme Board from September 2015 to the present date."

6. On 20 September 2018, the CQC acknowledged the request.
7. To date, a substantive response has not been issued.

Scope of the case

8. The complainant contacted the Commissioner on 19 November 2018 to complain about the failure by the CQC to respond to her request.
9. The Commissioner has considered whether the CQC has complied with its obligations in relation to the time for compliance at section 10 (1) of the FOIA.

Reasons for decision

10. Section 1(1) of the FOIA states that:

Any person making a request for information to a public authority is entitled –

(a) to be informed in writing by the public authority whether it holds information of the description specified in the request, and

(b) if that is the case, to have that information communicated to him.

11. Section 10(1) of the FOIA states that a public authority must respond to a request promptly and "not later than the twentieth working day following the date of receipt."
12. On 23 November 2018 the Commissioner wrote to the CQC, reminding it of its responsibilities and asking it to provide a substantive response to the complainant within 10 working days.
13. Despite this intervention the CQC has failed to respond to the complainant.
14. From the evidence provided to the Commissioner in this case, it is clear that the CQC did not deal with the request for information in accordance with the FOIA. The Commissioner finds that the CQC has breached section 10(1) by failing to respond to the request within 20 working days and it is now required to respond to the request in accordance with the FOIA.

Right of appeal

15. Either party has the right to appeal against this decision notice to the First-tier Tribunal (Information Rights). Information about the appeals process may be obtained from:

First-tier Tribunal (Information Rights)
GRC & GRP Tribunals,
PO Box 9300,
LEICESTER,
LE1 8DJ

Tel: 0300 1234504

Fax: 0870 739 5836

Email: GRC@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.justice.gov.uk/tribunals/general-regulatory-chamber

16. If you wish to appeal against a decision notice, you can obtain information on how to appeal along with the relevant forms from the Information Tribunal website.
17. Any Notice of Appeal should be served on the Tribunal within 28 (calendar) days of the date on which this decision notice is sent.

Signed

Ben Tomes
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Wilmslow
Cheshire
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