



POLICY DOCUMENT

Freedom of Information Policy

POLICY TITLE:	Freedom of Information
LEAD OFFICER:	Janet Walters
DATE APPROVED:	May 2014
APPROVED BY:	EMT and Board
IMPLEMENTATION DATE:	With Immediate Effect. (Unless any legislative changes occur before that date.)
DATE FOR NEXT REVIEW:	February 2017
ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE:	Data Protection Policy
TEAMS AFFECTED:	All SLHD Teams and Board Members
THIS POLICY REPLACES WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT:	Freedom of Information v1.1

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Revision History

Date of this revision:	February 2014
Date of next review:	February 2016
Responsible Officer:	Customer Care Service Manager

Version Number	Version Date	Author/Group commenting	Summary of Changes
0.1	Oct 2009		1 st Draft
1.0	Dec 2009		Approved by Board
1.1	Jan 2012	Janet Walters	Amendments due to re-alignment of teams and responsibility
1.2	Feb 2014	Janet Walters/ Louise Robson	Review
2.0	May 2014	Board	Approved

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Freedom of Information Policy

1 Introduction

1.1 As a public body St. Leger Homes of Doncaster Ltd (SLHD) is required to comply with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI).

The Act was introduced to help promote openness and transparency.

The Act enables the public to request information which would not normally be open to them provided that:

- the information is held by SLHD
- it does not fall within the exemptions of the Act

2 Purpose

2.1 The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure that all Board members and staff are aware of the principles of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and how this may influence operations of the Company regarding provision of information to members of the public.

3 Scope

3.1 This policy applies to all services provided by SLHD and any member of staff receiving a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act.

4 Responsibilities

4.1 It is the responsibility of all SLHD staff to adhere to this policy. The Freedom

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of Information Officer (Customer Relations Manager) has responsibility for the co-ordination and provision (unless exempt) of all requests.

5 Background

- 5.1 The FOI Act came into force at the beginning of 2005. It deals with the public access to official information. The Act is retrospective and applies to all information, not just information since the Act came into force.
- 5.2 SLHD has a Document Retention Policy which is based on good practice and guidance from the Records Management Society of Great Britain. At this time it is not possible to automatically cull information based on its age on the Anite Information system used by SLHD and the Council but this is being considered within the Anite Development Group.

6 The Publication Scheme

- 6.1 The Information Commissioner requires all public companies to have a Publication Scheme, which is a commitment to make certain information available and a guide for the public on how to find the information. All of the information referred to in the publication scheme is readily available to the public, either via the SLHD website or can be requested in hard copy.

7 Policy

- 7.1 The Freedom of Information Act requires that we are open, honest and transparent in our dealing with the public and as such our adoption of this policy complements our company values of openness and honesty.
- 7.2 The Act provides individuals with the right to request information held by a public authority in writing, which can be in either format of letter or E Mail
- 7.3 Some information is exempt from disclosure. There are 23 exemptions from the Act, some of these are “absolute” and some are “qualified”.

“**Absolute**” exemptions cover potential disclosure of information where harm to the public interest may result e.g. disclosure of personal information which may result in a breach of confidence resulting in legal action, or court records.

“**Qualified**” exemptions cover the release of information where releasing the information may damage the public interest more than withholding it e.g. Health and Safety issues or law enforcement.

- 7.4 SLHD will make all appropriate information available apart from those items which fall within the guidance as being exempt. All requests for information will be dealt with in accordance with statutory timescales of 20 working days.
- 7.5 Although the Act does allow the company to make a reasonable charge for the provision of the information, SLHD will follow the practice of the Council by making no charge for information provided under the Act other than in

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exceptional cases.

8 Monitoring and Review

8.1 All SLHD Freedom of Information requests will be monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure that they comply with the legislation. A log of requests and subsequent actions is kept by the Customer Relations Team and reported in the Heads of Service template on a monthly basis.

9 Performance Standards & Reporting

9.1 There is a statutory 20 working days timescale for responses to requests under the Freedom of Information Act.

10 Further Guidance

10.1 Further guidance can be obtained from the Customer Relations Team on 01302 862726 or on the Information Commissioners Website at www.ico.gov.uk.

11 Request for other information

11.1 Requests for information of a more personal or individual nature will be considered under the Data Protection Act. Please see separate SLHD Data Protection policy and procedure.

12 Partnership issues

12.1 For consistency In the spirit of joint working and as outlined in the Memorandum of Articles of Association, SLHD Freedom of Information Policy is closely aligned to that of DMBC.

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