

Preston's College

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY

Freedom of Information

Introduction

1. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (“the Act”) imposes a number of obligations on public authorities, which for these purposes includes the College, and provides the public with wide rights of access to the College’s records. In essence, members of the public have a statutory right:
 - a. From 29 February 2004, to obtain (either from the College’s website or in some other form) all the information covered by the College’s Publication Scheme.
 - b. From 1 January 2005, to request (with some minor limitations) any information held by the College, regardless of when it was created, by whom, or the form in which it is now recorded.
2. This Policy, and its associated Codes of Practice, set out how the College will meet its obligations under the Act. The Corporation Board has overall responsibility for the Policy and for ensuring that it is complied with. The Board has delegated to the Principal responsibility for the associated Codes of Practice and for ensuring that they are implemented across the College and are reviewed annually.

Policy Statement

3. The College is committed to being open and honest in the conduct of its operations and to complying fully with the Freedom of Information Act. To this end the College will:
 - a. Be open with the general public and the media and will place in the public domain as much information about its activities as is practicable and, subject to the exemptions permitted under the Act, will make all other information available on request.
 - b. Establish records management organisations, structures and procedures which meet the requirements of the Lord Chancellor’s Code of Practice on the Management of Records.
 - c. Deal with all requests for information in accordance with the Lord Chancellor’s Code of Practice on the Discharge of Public Authorities’ Functions.
4. There will be occasions when the College will not be able to supply all the information requested. Information will only be withheld in accordance with the exemptions laid down in the Act, and in particular those concerning:

- a. The College's duties under the Data Protection Act 1998 to keep confidential sensitive information about individual members of staff and students.
 - b. Other legal and contractual obligations; or
 - c. Material detrimental to the safe and efficient conduct of the College's operations or which is commercially sensitive.
5. On such occasions the College will always state the reasons why information has been withheld.

Relationship with Existing Policies

6. This Policy has been formulated within the context of the following College documents:
- a. The College's Data Protection Policy.
 - b. The College's Information Systems Security Policy.

Publication Scheme

7. The College's Publication Scheme, which has been approved by the Office of the Information Commissioner, is available on the College's Internet website at www.preston.ac.uk for inspection at the College's Library, or in printed form by application to the Principal.

Implementation of the Policy

8. The procedures for implementation of this Policy are contained in the Freedom of Information Guidelines.

Review

9. The operation of the Policy and its associated Codes of Practice will be reviewed annually by the Data Management Group.

Freedom of Information Guidelines

What is a Publication Scheme?

This Publication Scheme is a complete guide to the information routinely published by Preston's College. It describes the information about Preston's College and our activities that we make publicly available. We shall review the Scheme at regular intervals and monitor how it is operating

It is important to us that this Scheme meets your needs and we have designed it to identify clearly everything we publish so that you can find information about Preston's College easily. Under Section 19 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 Preston's College has a legal duty to adopt and maintain a Publication Scheme for the publication of our information. The purpose of the Act is to promote greater openness by public authorities (of which Preston's College is one).

Preston's College has adopted the model publication scheme developed for the Further Education sector and is therefore committed to publishing the information it describes.

This model is designed for further education colleges and sixth form colleges across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The purpose of the model is to save institutions duplicating effort in producing individual schemes and to assist the public in accessing information from across the sector. However, to reflect the diversity in size and function of institution, a number of optional classes of information are included. As a result, models within the sector will vary slightly. Any optional classes relevant to us have been included in our scheme.

The Publication Scheme will help you to find all the information that we publish. The Freedom of Information Act does not change the right of students, staff or other people at Preston to have their confidentiality protected in accordance with Article 8 of the Human Rights Convention, the Data Protection Act and at common law. Maintaining the legal right to confidentiality continues to be an important commitment on our part

Rights of Access to Information

The Freedom of Information Act recognises that as a member of the public, you have the right to know how public services such as Preston's College are organised and run, how much they cost and how you can make complaints if you need to. You have the right to know which educational or training services are being provided, the targets that are being set, the standards of services that are expected and the results being achieved.

Since 1 January 2005 the Act has obliged Preston's College to respond to requests about the information we hold and record in any form and the Freedom of Information Act will create a right of access to that information. The rights to request and access this information are subject to some exemptions that Preston's College has to take into consideration before deciding what information can be released.

The College will respond to an access request within 20 days of receiving the request. Sometimes, some or all of the information cannot be provided and we will explain the reasons why not when this happens.

Requests for information which is not covered by the publication scheme must be made in writing to the address below.

Under the Data Protection Act 1998, you are also entitled to access any personal information held about you at the same address:

The Freedom of Information and Data Protection Officer
Preston's College
St Vincents Rd
Fulwood
Preston
PR2 8UR

Email: dpfoi@preston.ac.uk

Information Management

Information stated within the publication scheme will be retained in line with our retention and disposal schedules and our archiving policy which, where applicable, will comply with Public Record Office Guidance. The Publication Scheme can be found on our website.

Information not covered by the Publication Scheme

Preston will not be required to release information to which an exemption in the Act legitimately applies. However, we may be required to explain to the applicant why we are not releasing information and we may also have to justify this to the Information Commissioner.

Feedback

Any questions, comments or complaints about this scheme should be sent in writing to:

Head of MIS & ICT

Preston's College

St Vincents Rd

Fulwood

Preston

PR2 8UR

Telephone: (01772) 2255065

Email: dpfoi@preston.ac.uk

If you have a complaint about the operation of the Publication Scheme, or how Preston's College has dealt with your request for information from the scheme, please write to: Complaints at the address shown above.

If Preston's College are unable to resolve any complaint, you can complain to the Information Commissioner, the independent body who oversees the Freedom of Information Act:

Information Commissioner

Wycliffe House

Water Lane

Wilmslow

Cheshire

SK9 5AF

Further Information

More information about the Freedom of Information Act is available on the Information Commissioner's website.

Telephone: 01625 545700

Fax: 01625 524510

Email: mail@ico.gsi.gov.uk

Web: www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk