**Freedom of Information Act 2005**

The Freedom of Information Act (FOI Act), which came into full force on January 1, 2005, grants the public a general right to access recorded information held by most UK public authorities, requiring them to respond to requests within 20 working days.

Here's a more detailed explanation:

Key Principles:

* **Right to Access:**

The FOI Act establishes a general right for individuals to request and receive information held by public authorities.

* **Transparency:**

The Act promotes transparency and accountability by requiring public authorities to disclose information unless an exemption applies.

* **Obligation to Respond:**

Public authorities must respond to FOI requests within 20 working days, stating whether they hold the requested information and, if so, providing it.

* **Exemptions:**

The Act includes exemptions that allow public authorities to withhold information in certain circumstances, such as national security, personal privacy, or ongoing investigations.

* **No Need for Justification:**

Requester does not need to justify the reason for wanting the information, and the public authority must justify refusing the information.

* **Equal Treatment:**

All requesters should be treated equally, regardless of their identity or background.

How to Make a Request:

* **In Writing:**

FOI requests must be made in writing, which can include emails, letters, or faxes.

* **Clear Description:**

The request should clearly describe the information being sought.

* **Public Authority:**

The request should be directed to the relevant public authority holding the information.

* **No Special Form:**

There is no specific form to use, any written request for information held by a public body could be categorized as a FOI request.

Who is Covered?

* **Public Authorities:**

The Act covers a wide range of public authorities, including government departments, local councils, police forces, and other public sector bodies.

* **Exceptions:**

Certain bodies are only covered for some of the information they hold, for example: GPs, dentists and other health practitioners only have to provide information about their NHS work; the BBC, Channel 4 and the Welsh channel S4C (the public service broadcasters) do not have to provide information about journalistic, literary or artistic activities.

* **Scottish bodies:**

Scottish bodies are covered by the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

Where to Find More Information:

* [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/make-a-freedom-of-information-request): Offers guidance on making FOI requests.
* [Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)](https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/foi/what-is-the-foi-act-and-are-we-covered/): Provides information about the FOI Act and its implementation.
* [The National Archives](https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/legislation/section-46/): Offers information on the FOI Act and related legislation.