

## Annex: The National Archives: Freedom of Information Improvement Action Plan

	Identified area of improvement	Proposed Action	Status	Q3 – Jan/Feb 2024 Update	Q4 – July/August 2024
1	<b>Resourcing</b> - Improve service capacity to address FOI request demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruiting more staff within the team/s responsible for facilitating FOI responses following Executive Team agreement to prioritise recruitment in this area.</li> </ul>	Ongoing. Resource levels will be kept under review.	<p><b>Status – On-going</b></p> <p>Q3 – By start of Q4 – October both the FOIC and MOD AST were fully staffed against budget – offering some stability.</p> <p>Budgeting plans for the next financial year have been the focus – specifically exploring funding options to expand our capacity to meet demand for access to Service Personnel Records.</p>	<p><b>Status – On-going</b></p> <p>The MOD Access Service Team during Q4 were fully staffed and are utilising the dedicated administrative support that joined them in Q3 (see 3. Handling for more information). FOI Centre carried out recruitment to fill posts vacated on promotion and are carrying one vacancy.</p> <p>For this financial year, we have reviewed existing budgets and plan to double our access service team (18 – 38), plus recruit more support staff into the project. Recruitment is underway.</p> <p>Resourcing the MOD AST will form a prominent part of TNA’s future spending review bid.</p>

2	<b>Resourcing</b> - Implement overtime to address specific blockages in FOI process for the MOD Service Personnel Records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Balance resource between new and backlog cases to ensure there is progression against all cases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Under review</li> </ul>	<p><b>Status – Under review</b></p> <p>We will continue to balance our resource between new and backlogged cases with a view to eliminating the backlog over time.</p>	<p><b>Status – Under review</b></p> <p>We utilised overtime to support the MOD AST in logging the increasing number of FOIAs received (October onwards saw the team receiving around or over 2000 requests per month – as the normal monthly request rate).</p>
3	<b>Handling</b> - Implement prioritisation approach to address both new cases and back log	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus resource on triaging cases – to understand more about what is needed to resolve the active cases.</li> </ul>	<p>Completed for FOIC</p> <p>On-going for MOD Service Personnel Records</p>	<p><b>Status – On-going</b></p> <p>MOD AST have developed a triage function for requests, with dedicated request service advisor now in post. The team have established a system involving the use of status/reasons to close cases – including where clarification is needed, but not provided. Triaging is being further developed, including how cases are received and logged.</p>	<p><b>Status – On-going</b></p> <p>MOD AST - a revised approach was developed for Paid Search requests (open records) to maintain resource between incoming and backlog cases, with a view to improving customer service.</p>
4	<b>Handling –</b> Review existing FOI processes to identify efficiencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify improvements that could be made to the S66 consultation process.</li> <li>Review of MoD team processes to deliver handling efficiencies</li> </ul>	<p>On-going</p> <p>We will adopt a continuous improvement approach and where further improvements can be made; we will take this forward.</p>	<p><b>Status - Continual Review to identify efficiencies.</b></p> <p>In Q3 both teams have amended auto-acknowledgments to explain to requesters that TNA has 30 working days in which to complete FOI requests for transferred public records, rather than 20 working days. This means</p>	<p><b>Status - Continual Review to identify efficiencies.</b></p> <p>In Q4 both teams continued to work on efficiencies to streamline and improve processes.</p> <p>Key one for the MOD AST is fully utilising the case tracking system</p>

		<p>and to ensure clear escalation routes exist where process issues create late running cases.</p>		<p>that we no longer need to issue correspondence on day 20 for these cases, reducing the administrative burden.</p> <p>The FOIC amended CAB stats collation; collecting relevant data as each case is completed, rather than collating this data at the end of the quarter. The change has made this process more efficient and reduced the administrative burden on the FOIC.</p> <p>The FOIC has identified amendments which can be made to our case handling system, which should reduce the administrative work required for CAB stats collation. We continue to work with our IT team to request and make these changes.</p> <p>The MOD AST have updated communication with requesters to assist them in using the correct webforms and reduce admin burden around logging.</p> <p>The MOD AST have also improved the assignment process for faster allocation to case officers and in conjunction with this improved data reporting on real-time cases</p>	<p>functionality and removing reliance on legacy spreadsheets – ceasing the duplication of work and saving time.</p> <p>FOI Centre – Have increased the number of FOI Panels for s66 cases leading to reduction in waiting /time taken on the public interest test.</p> <p>Cabinet Office FOI Stats: Amendments made to our case management system (adding fields to match the Cab Stats reporting form) are now completed and should make Cab Stats collation for Q2 in 2024 (April – June) require far less manual input from FOIC Staff</p>
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				using the case handling system. This has improved logging rates and thus significant improvements in how fast a case can be picked up and processed.	
5	<b>Handling –</b> Review approach to consultation with departments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review processes in place with those public bodies that we are required to consult with most often following the receipt of information requests.</li> </ul>	Completed and will be kept under review.	<b>Status - Completed and will be kept under review.</b>  This is constantly monitored and the FOIC are engaging most regular stakeholders where there are delays. This is via ‘trackers’ illustrating which cases are long-running and what input is required.	<b>Status - Completed and will be kept under review.</b>  FOIC continue to engage with stakeholders using trackers. Where delays are arising because of stakeholders staffing levels, the FOIC are supporting them by prioritising requests requiring their input.
6	<b>Handling –</b> Consider whether the provisions of section 10(4), which allow a longer response time, of FOIA might be appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In line with the ICO recommendation, explore with other parts of government whether there is benefit in seeking ministerial authority to apply section 10(4) provisions to requests for service personnel records.</li> </ul>	To be reviewed January 2024	<b>Status – In progress</b>  We are in the process of drafting a proposal for submission to Ministers for them to consider the appropriateness and desirability of introducing a possible s.10(4) Order in relation to this material.  We intend to finalise and submit as soon as possible.	<b>Status – In progress</b>  Same as Q3 – we remain committed to exploring this option and plan to submit this request to Ministers as soon as feasible.
7	<b>Governance -</b> Improved data capture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To align data reports from the MOD project and the FOI Centre – specifically to monitor on a</li> </ul>	Completed – MOD Service Personnel Team  Ongoing for FOIC	<b>Status – Completed – MOD AST &amp; Ongoing for FOIC</b>	<b>Status – Completed – MOD AST &amp; Ongoing for FOIC</b>

		<p>month-to-month basis if the active caseload is increasing, i.e., does the volume of cases received exceed the volume of cases resolved monthly (evidence for assessing capacity vs demand and resource needs).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More work around forecasting – FOI demand and the resource level we require to match this.</li> <li>• Providing these reports to those that govern the project and FOI Compliance (Steering Committees and Executive Team)</li> </ul>		<p>We do not yet have the same tool for FOIC. Exploring forecasting/performance models within FOIC – i.e., D365. Need to re-engage with Strategic Insights for this work.</p> <p>The data we do capture and use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly FOI dashboards, &amp; quarterly CAB stats</li> <li>• Corporate request log to monitor number and progress of corporate FOI requests across the internal business areas.</li> <li>• Case Assignment spreadsheet to monitor number of requests still requiring a case handler – illustrates if the Centre is accruing a backlog.</li> <li>• Monitoring of s66 FOI Panels with AC/DCMS when submitted/received back</li> <li>• ‘Trackers’ of long running and outstanding requests with certain departments</li> </ul> <p>In MOD AST data capture includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resource model</li> <li>• Continued data reporting to the MOD project Steering Group.</li> </ul>	<p>Data capture remains the same as Q3.</p> <p>However improvements have been made to our tracking system, which is managed and audited regularly to ensure data accuracy – improving the data we do capture.</p>
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				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monthly dashboards - Correcting D365 errors and consistent use from the team to create and get more accurate reports.</li> </ul>	
8	<b>Governance -</b> FOI Compliance remains part of the Corporate Risk Register	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organisational focus on the risk – continue to receive senior support and collaboration to address FOI compliance.</li> <li>Internal Audit - Proposed and Scheduled for Q4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Audit Objective: To provide assurance on the extent to which the Freedom of Information (FOI) Action Plan is being delivered as intended, and whether associated risks to deliver the action plan are being managed as reported.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	On-going  To be completed in January 2024	<b>Status – Ongoing</b>  Internal Audit – Focussing on the delivery of the Action Plan to be completed in Q4 – December 2023 and reported in January 2024 (will cover in Q4 update.)	<b>Status – On-going</b>  Internal Audit Report – Final Report May 2024. We received 4 recommendations: first three now complete: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Risk log to be implemented on delivery of plan.</li> <li>Reminders for publication of quarterly review of plan</li> <li>Consideration given to any relevant KPIs</li> <li>Lessons learned – to be completed by October 2024</li> </ol>
9	<b>Transparency -</b> Dedicated web page on MOD Service Personnel Collection Transfer Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To manage expectations on 1. what records are held and 2. the timeframe for responses (active FOI requests – service level details)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completed – but consideration is being given to improvements in this area – i.e., <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>updated FAQs,</li> <li>links to MOD web pages,</li> <li>navigation and explanation</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>Status – As per Q1 update.</b>	<b>Status – As per Q1 update.</b>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide clear and web searchable information on how to make requests (web forms &amp; FAQs)</li> <li>To provide a place to include information on the transfer plan – high level details on when records might be held.</li> <li>Use FAQs to manage common BAU (BUSINESS AS USUAL) enquiries – reducing FOI handling.</li> </ul>	around the three main web forms		
10	<b>Transparency</b> – Publication of the breakdown FOI Statistics by FOI request type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide on our website insight into how we are performing in relation to the variety of request types we receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TNA Business Records</li> <li>Archival Records</li> <li>MOD Service Personnel Records</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Completed.	<b>Status – Completed</b>  We continue to update this data on a quarterly basis and publish on the FOI pages of our public-facing website.	<b>Status – Completed</b>  As per Q3 update.

11	<b>Transparency</b> – Publication of the initial Action Plan	Adding the FOI Improvement Action Plan to our website	Completed	<b>Status – Completed</b>  We have published this improvement plan on our website.	<b>Status – Ongoing commitment per quarter</b>  Q3 – now published. Q4 to be added – August 2024.
12	<b>Transparency</b> – Publication of lessons learned & revised action plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Once we have more data on the impact of initial actions – i.e., Q4 2022 &amp; Q1 2023 FOI statistics results - issue a revised action plan and produced lessons learned report.</li> </ul>	Summer 2023	<b>Status – On-going</b>  For Q3 we have reviewed the action plan and added in new and relevant actions (i.e. Audit).  Considered lessons learned, but we will review at 12 month point to give us time to complete actions and deliver against this plan.	<b>Status – On-going</b>  As per audit recommendation above this will be completed by October 2024.