The National Archives: Freedom of Information Improvement Action Plan

	Identified area of improvement	Proposed Action	Status	Q2 October 2023 Update	Q3 – Jan/Feb 2024 Update
1	**Resourcing** - Improve service capacity to address FOI request demand	• Recruiting more staff within the team/s responsible for facilitating FOI responses following Executive Team agreement to prioritise recruitment in this area.	Ongoing. Resource levels will be kept under review.	**Status - Ongoing. Resource levels will be kept under review.** Our Executive team has prioritised resourcing our FOI team/s and has committed to keeping this resourcing under active review.	**Status – On-going** Q3 – By start of Q4 – October both the FOIC and MOD AST were fully staffed against budget – offering some stability. 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.
2	**Resourcing** - Implement overtime to address specific blockages in FOI process for the MOD Service Personnel Records	• Balance resource between new and backlog cases to ensure there is progression against all cases	• Under review	**Status – Under review** We are continuing to use overtime to reduce backlogs and will continue to do so until compliance levels have improved. We will continue to balance our resource between new and backlogged cases with a view to eliminating the backlog over time.	**Status – Under review** We will continue to balance our resource between new and backlogged cases with a view to eliminating the backlog over time.

3	**Handling** - Implement prioritisation approach to address both new cases and back log	• Focus resource on triaging cases – to understand more about what is needed to resolve the active cases.	Completed for FOIC On-going for MOD Service Personnel Records	Our FOI Centre has an established process for triaging cases; supported by the role of Service Request Advisor. We will further invest in triage resource in MOD SP team. The processes/workflows are slightly different for the cases dealt with by this team so we are going to continue to review where innovative approaches will be of benefit.	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.
4	**Handling** – Review existing FOI processes to identify efficiencies	• Identify improvements that could be made to the S66 consultation process. • Review of MoD team processes to deliver handling efficiencies and to ensure clear escalation routes exist where process issues create late running cases.	On-going We will adopt a continuous improvement approach and where further improvements can be made; we will take this forward.	**Completed.** We will adopt a continuous improvement approach and where further improvements can be made; we will take this forward. As reported in Q1 – implemented several process improvements in both the FOIC and MOD Access Service Team. Further process improvements for Q2 in the FOIC include:	**Status - Continual Review to identify efficiencies.** 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 that we no longer need to issue correspondence on day 20 for these cases, reducing the administrative burden. The FOIC amended CAB stats collation; collecting relevant

				• Identified a new extension process for the 10-day extensions for transferred records – should save administration time. • Change proposed for the CAB Stat collation – to save FOIC staff time. • Increased the number of FOI Panels for S66 cases – throughput of cases increased and helps resolution turnaround.	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. 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. The MOD AST have updated communication with requesters to assist them in using the correct webforms and reduce admin burden around logging. 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 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	**Handling –** Review approach to consultation with departments.	• Review processes in place with those public bodies that we are required to consult with most often following the receipt of information requests.	Completed and will be kept under review.	**Status - Completed and will be kept under review.** See update above.	**Status - Completed and will be kept under review.** 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.
6	**Handling** – Consider whether the provisions of section 10(4), which allow a longer response time, of FOIA might be appropriate.	• 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.	To be reviewed January 2024	**Status – to be reviewed January 2024** We intend to imminently begin exploration of this option (Q3 2023), and the potential benefit it would bring to The National Archives. In light of sustained pressures, we intend to explore this option before the original target date of January 2024.	**Status – In progress** 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.
7	**Governance -** Improved data capture	• To align data reports from the MOD project and the FOI Centre – specifically to monitor on a month-to-month	Completed – MOD Service Personnel Team Ongoing for FOIC	**Status - Completed** We have developed a regular internal	**Status –** **Completed – MOD AST & Ongoing for FOIC** We don't yet have the same tool for FOIC. Exploring

		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).
		
		• More work around forecasting – FOI demand and the resource level we require to match this.
		
		• Providing these reports to those that govern the project and FOI Compliance (Steering Committees and Executive Team)
				performance report. This will continue to iterate and improve as we develop the workflow systems that sit behind it.
				
				Our Strategic Insights Team has also built the first version of a forecasting and resource tool. As our trend data matures, we will increasingly use this tool to plan resource requirements.
					forecasting/performance models within FOIC – i.e., D365. Need to re-engage with Strategic Insights for this work.
					
					The data we do capture and use:
					• Monthly FOI dashboards, & quarterly CAB stats
					• Corporate request log to monitor number and progress of corporate FOI requests across the internal business areas.
					• Case Assignment spreadsheet to monitor number of requests still requiring a case handler – illustrates if the Centre is accruing a backlog.
					• Monitoring of s66 FOI Panels with AC/DCMS when submitted/received back
					• 'Trackers' of long-running and outstanding requests with certain departments
					
					In MOD AST data capture includes:
					    • Resource model
					    • Continued data reporting to the MOD

					• project Steering Group. • Monthly dashboards - Correcting D365 errors and consistent use from the team to create and get more accurate reports.
8	**Governance** - FOI Compliance remains part of the Corporate Risk Register	• Organisational focus on the risk – continue to receive senior support and collaboration to address FOI compliance. • Internal Audit - Proposed and Scheduled for Q4 o 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.	On-going To be completed in January 2024	**Status – Ongoing** FOI compliance remains on our corporate risk register, and we are reporting progress and performance on a quarterly basis to our corporate Audit and Risk Committee and to our Chief Operating Officer. FOI compliance remains a high priority for The National Archives. This is demonstrated in part by having achieved 100% compliance on 'corporate' FOIs, the requests that require cross-organisational input.	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.)

9	**Transparency** - Dedicated web page on MOD Service Personnel	• To manage expectations on 1. what records are held and 2. the timeframe for responses (active	• Completed – but consideration is being given to improvements in this area – i.e.,
			    o updated FAQS,
			    o links to MOD web pages,
				Status – May 2023
				
				We have created a dedicated project page on our website to
					As per Q1 update.

	Collection Transfer Project	FOI requests – service level details) • To provide clear and web searchable information on how to make requests (web forms & FAQs) • To provide a place to include information on the transfer plan – high level details on when records might be held. • Use FAQs to manage common BAU enquiries – reducing FOI handling.	o navigation and explanation around the three main web forms	better explain our management of service personnel records. This includes a revised set of FAQs, clearer guidance to requestors plus clearer web form links. This will continue to iterate and develop. We are also providing additional detail on timelines to all requestors when they submit an information request.	

10	**Transparency –** Publication of the breakdown FOI Statistics by FOI request type	• To provide on our website insight into how we are performing in relation to the variety of request types we receive:
		    o TNA Business Records
		    o Archival Records
		    o MOD Service
			Completed.	**Status – Completed**
				
				We have published a breakdown of our performance information on our website. We will update this data on a quarterly basis and publish on the FOI pages of our public-facing website.
					Status – Completed
					
					We continue to update this data on a quarterly basis and publish on the FOI pages of our public-facing website.

		Personnel Records			
11	**Transparency –** Publication of the initial Action Plan	Adding the FOI Improvement Action Plan to our website	Completed	**Status – Completed** We have published this improvement plan on our website.	**Status – Ongoing commitment per quarter** Q2 – now published. Q3 to be added in March 2024.
12	**Transparency –** Publication of lessons learned & revised action plan	• Once we have more data on the impact of initial actions – i.e., Q4 2022 & Q1 2023 FOI statistics results - issue a revised action plan and produced lessons learned report.	Summer 2023	**Status - June 2024** We will review our action plan at the end of Q2.	Status – On-going 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.