

The National Archives: Freedom of Information Improvement Action Plan – Q2 October 2023

	Identified area of improvement	Proposed Action	Status	Q1 - July 2023 Update	Q2 - October 2023 Update
1	<p><b>Resourcing -</b> Improve service capacity to address FOI request demand</p>	<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>	<p>Ongoing. Resource levels will be kept under review.</p>	<p><b>Status - Ongoing. Resource levels will be kept under review.</b></p> <p>Our Executive team has prioritised resourcing our FOI team, agreeing to double the size of the team that manages access to service personnel records. Our Executive Team has also committed to keeping this allocation under active review and will assess whether further resource is required as we see the impact of the first phase of additional staffing. We have significantly increased the resource dedicated to handling FOI requests, particularly in relation to MOD service records.</p> <p>The dedicated MOD Access Service Team has</p>	<p>Our Executive team has continued to prioritise resourcing our FOI teams and has committed to keeping this allocation under active review – assessing what further resource is required.</p> <p>Our FOI Centre – the team responsible for non-MOD requests – has stabilised, currently fully staffed.</p> <p>The MOD Access Service Team has grown to a budgeted headcount of 17, including a new Head of Access service, 12 review staff, 3 managers, 1 support staff. 12 of these posts are now filled, 4 have been appointed and will start within the next month – hoping to be fully staffed by end of October 2023.</p> <p>There remains a lead time associated with recruitment and training; we hope to see the impact of all this recruitment in Q1 – 2024.</p>

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				<p>grown from a headcount of 8 in February to a budgeted headcount of 16. Inevitably, there is a lead time associated with recruitment and training, but 11 of these posts are now filled, 3 have been appointed and will start within the next month and recruitment for the remaining 2 posts is underway.</p> <p>Our FOI Centre – the team responsible for non-MOD requests – has stabilised and we have put in place expedited approval processes to backfill vacant posts.</p> <p>We have also increased the resource that supports the MOD access team through producing and copying records.</p>	<p>The resource that supports the teams; specifically, the MOD access team through producing and copying records and redacting still needs reviewing – to determine if they can service the growing demand.</p>
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2	<p><b>Resourcing</b> - Implement overtime to address specific blockages in FOI process for the MOD Service Personnel Records</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From December to March 2023 – carry out weekend working to address the release of information from these records (redaction).</li> </ul> <p>By end of this work, have resolved all pre-October 2022 cases while putting in place resources to sustain a position of having a very limited number of cases that are older than 6-months before eliminating the backlog as our capacity increases.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Completed</p>	<p><b>Status – Ongoing</b></p> <p>We have successfully used targeted overtime to reduce backlogs and will continue to do so until compliance levels have improved, and the backlog is significantly reduced.</p> <p>We have now reviewed all cases received before October 2022. We will continue to balance our resource between new and backlogged cases with a view to eliminating the backlog over time.</p>	<p>We are continuing to use overtime to reduce backlogs and will continue to do so until compliance levels have improved.</p> <p>We will continue to balance our resource between new and backlogged cases with a view to eliminating the backlog over time.</p>
3	<p><b>Handling</b> - Implement prioritisation approach to address both new cases and back log</p>	<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 – Completed</b></p> <p>Our FOI Centre has an established process for triaging cases. As part of our improvement activity, we have adopted many of the same principles into our handling of MOD service records. Our recent recruitment includes a member of staff who has</p>	<p>Our FOI Centre has an established process for triaging cases.</p> <p>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.</p>

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				responsibility for triage, and we will further invest in triage resource. We have also upskilled the wider team to undertake this function where needed. We are also dynamically balancing resource between servicing new cases and addressing our case backlog. We consider that this action is completed but will continue to review where new approaches will be of benefit.	
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 and to ensure clear escalation routes exist where process issues create late running cases.</li> </ul>	Completed  We will adopt a continuous improvement approach and where further improvements can be made, we will take this forward.	<b>Completed.</b>  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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identified a new extension process for the 10-day extensions for transferred records – should save administration time.</li> <li>Change proposed for the CAB Stat collation</li> </ul>

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					<p>– to save FOIC staff time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased the number of FOI Panels for S66 cases – throughput of cases increased and helps resolution turnaround.</li> </ul>
5	<p><b>Handling –</b> Review approach to consultation with departments.</p>	<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>	<p>Completed and will be kept under review.</p>	<p><b>Status - Completed and will be kept under review.</b></p> <p>See update above.</p>	<p>See update above.</p>
6	<p><b>Handling –</b> Consider whether the provisions of section 10(4), which allow a longer response time, of FOIA might be appropriate.</p>	<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>	<p>To be reviewed January 2024</p>	<p><b>Status – to be reviewed January 2024</b></p> <p>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.</p>	<p>We have begun exploration of this option (Q3 2023) and drafted a proposal to be discussed internally before submission to Ministers.</p> <p>We intend to finalise this option by January 2024.</p>

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7	<b>Governance - Improved data capture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To align data reports from the MOD project and the FOI Centre – specifically to monitor on a 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).</li> <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>Completed – MOD Service Personnel Team</p> <p>Ongoing for FOIC</p>	<p><b>Status - Completed</b></p> <p>We have developed a regular internal performance report. This will continue to iterate and improve as we develop the workflow systems that sit behind it.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>We are starting to use this tool to plan resource requirements. This will be extremely useful in our upcoming budget/resource planning.</p> <p>We don't 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>
8	<b>Governance - FOI Compliance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organisational focus on the risk – continue to receive senior</li> </ul>	On-going	<b>Status – Ongoing</b>	FOI compliance remains on our corporate risk register and

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	remains part of the Corporate Risk Register	support and collaboration to address FOI compliance.		<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>it was agreed at Executive level that governance would remain with the Board – and the new Independent Audit and Risk Committee member will also to be briefed on the matter. This reporting will be done on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>FOI compliance remains a high priority for The National Archives. This is demonstrated in part by the new reporting process at a senior and independent level. And as in Q1 by continuing to achieve 100% compliance on 'corporate' FOIs, the requests that require cross-organisational input.</p>
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> <li>To provide clear and web searchable information on how</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>o updated FAQs,</li> <li>o links to MOD web pages,</li> <li>o navigation and explanation around the three main web forms</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Status – May 2023</b></p> <p>We have created a dedicated project page on our website to better explain our management of service personnel records. This includes a revised set of FAQs, clearer guidance to requestors</p>	As per Q1 update.

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		<p>to make requests (web forms &amp; FAQs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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 enquiries – reducing FOI handling.</li> </ul>		<p>plus clearer web form links. This will continue to iterate and develop.</p> <p>We are also providing additional detail on timelines to all requestors when they submit an information request.</p>	
10	<p><b>Transparency –</b> Publication of the breakdown FOI Statistics by FOI request type</p>	<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.	<p><b>Status – Completed</b></p> <p>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.</p>	<p>We continue to update this data on a quarterly basis and publish on the FOI pages of our public-facing website.</p>



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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.	We have published this improvement plan on our website – to be updated for Q2.
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 - Summer 2023</b>  We will review our action plan at the end of Q2.	For Q3 – we will update the action plan to include on-going actions and additional and required actions.