VILLAGE PRACTICE

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY

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1.1	July 2027	Karen Jeffries	Mikala Millard	

The following policy sets out a possible approach to the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000 by a practice.

Introduction

The Freedom of Information (FOI) Act was passed in 2000 and replaced the Open Government Code of Practice that has been in place since 1994. The Act gives the public a general right of access to all types of recorded information held by public authorities. The Act came into full effect on the 1st January 2005.

The Act places a statutory obligation on all public bodies to publish details of *all* recorded information that they hold and to allow, with a few exceptions, the general public to have access to this information on request.

The practice recognises the importance of the FOI Act and it will ensure that appropriate systems are put in place to publicise what recorded information is kept by the practice and how this information can be accessed on request by the general public.

1.0 The FOI Act

The main features of the Act are:

- a general right of access to information held by public authorities
- exemptions from the duty to provide information
- a requirement on public authorities to exercise discretion; they may have to disclose information even when exempt under the Act (the 'public interest test')
- arrangements in respect of costs and fees
- a duty on public authorities to adopt publication schemes
- arrangements for enforcement and appeal
- a duty to provide advice and assistance to people who wish to make, or have made requests for information
- Codes of Practice

The UK legislation is wholly retrospective and applies to all information held by public authorities regardless of its date.

The Act is overseen by the Information Commissioner (ICO), who will have the power to issue enforcement notices and, if needs be, initiate court proceedings to ensure compliance.

The practice recognises its corporate responsibility under the Act to provide the general right of access to information held. The overall responsibility for this policy is with Dr PM Thakrar

2.0 Employee Responsibilities

All employees will, through appropriate training and responsible management:

- observe all forms of guidance, codes of practice and procedures about the secure storage, closure, retention and disposal of documents and records.
- be aware that ultimately the general public may have access to any piece of information held within the practice and must pay due regard to how they record information as part of their normal duties.
- on receipt of an information request immediately notify the IG/FOI lead.
- provide information promptly when requested from the IG/FOI lead.
- understand that breaches of this Policy may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal.

3.0 Organisation Responsibilities

The practice will:

- Comply with the FOI Act and sees it as an opportunity to enhance public trust and confidence in the practice.
    - Ensure that there is always one person with overall responsibility for FOI. Currently this person is Dr PM Thakrar
- Maintain a comprehensive 'Publication Scheme' – see Appendix A - that provides information which is readily accessible without the need for a formal FOI Act request.
- Seek to satisfy all FOI Act requests promptly and within 20 working days. However, if necessary, we will extend this timescale to give full consideration to a public interest test. If we do not expect to meet the deadline, we will inform the requester as soon as possible of the reasons for the delay and when we expect to have made a decision.
- Continue to protect the personal data entrusted to us, by disclosing it only in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018. Personal data cannot be disclosed in an FOI request.
- Provide advice and assistance to requesters to facilitate their use of FOI Act. We will publish our procedures and assist requesters to clarify their requests so that they can obtain the information that they require.
- Work with the Hampshire and Isle of Wight ICB, NHS England, the local Area Team and other bodies with whom we work to ensure that we can meet our FOI Act obligations, including the disclosure of any information that they hold on our behalf.

- Apply the exemptions provided in the FOI Act and, where qualified exemptions exist, the practice will disclose the information unless the balance of public interest lies in withholding it.
- Consult with third parties before disclosing information that could affect their rights and interests. However, according to the FOI Act, the practice must take the final decision on disclosure.
- Charge for information requests in line with the FOI Act fees regulations or other applicable regulations, including the Data Protection Act 2018.
- Record all FOI Act requests and our responses and will monitor our performance in handling requests and complaints.

Information held by the practice that is not published under this scheme can be requested in writing, when it's provision will be considered in line with the FOI provisions and exemptions.

References

Gov.uk - Freedom of Information Act 2000

Publication schemes: a guide | ICO

Information available from The Village Practice - Cowplain (*providing medical services under contract to the NHS*) under the Freedom of Information Act model publication scheme

Information covered by this scheme is only about the primary, general or personal medical services we provide under contract to the National Health Service.

Information to be published	**How the information can be obtained** (e.g. hard copy, website)	**Cost Per page**
Class 1 - Who we are and what we do (Organisational information, structures, locations and contacts) ***This will be current information only***	Practice website Home page: https://www.thecowplainvillagepractice.co.uk/	
Details of Clinicians – Doctors, nurses etc	Practice Team - THE VILLAGE PRACTICE	N/A
Contact details for the practice (named contacts where possible with telephone number and email address (if used))	Website and Practice leaflet Contact us - THE VILLAGE PRACTICE	N/A
Opening hours	Website and Practice leaflet Opening Hours - THE VILLAGE PRACTICE	N/A
Other staffing details	On request in writing from Practice Manager	35p

Meetings with suppliers Meetings specifically with pharmaceutical companies and other medical suppliers. We would expect as a minimum that this information should include the name of the company, the date and, if appropriate, the name of the member(s) of staff attending (if recorded), together with a general indication of the category of meeting, for example marketing or promotion. The names of staff attending should include any senior managers and any medically qualified staff if this information is recorded.	On request in writing from Practice Manager	35p
Class 2 – What we spend and how we spend it **(Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, procurement, contracts and financial audit)** ***Current and previous financial year as a minimum***		Maximum charge per sheet
Details on NHS/HSC funding received by the practice. *We would expect practices to consider publishing as much information as practically possible including as much detail as possible.*	Hampshire, Southampton and Isle of Wight CCG:	
Audit of NHS/HSC income	On request in writing from Practice Manager	35p
Details of expenditure items over £10,000 - published at least annually but at a more frequent quarterly or six-monthly interval where practical.	On request in writing from Practice Manager	35p
List and value of contracts awarded by the practice- this will only include contracts which have been through a formal tendering process.	On request in writing from Practice Manager	35p
Staff allowances and expenses that can be incurred or claimed, with totals paid to senior staff members (for the purpose of this document, senior staff are defined as partners or equivalent level), by references to categories.	On request in writing from Practice Manager	35p
	On request in writing from	35p

Pay policy	Practice Manager	
Declaration of GPs' NHS/HSC income. *The information made available as part of GPs' contractual obligation to publish their net income relating to NHS/HSC contracts,*	Website: THE VILLAGE PRACTICE	
Class 3 – What our priorities are and how we are doing **(Strategies and plans, performance indicators, audits, inspections and reviews)** ***Current and previous year as a minimum***		
Plans for the development and provision of NHS/HSC services	**Hampshire, Southampton and Isle of Wight CCG**	
Performance data including performance against targets	**QOF website:** **https://qof.digital.nhs.uk/**	
Inspection reports by regulators: *the CQC, HIW, RQIA and HSCB and any other regulators.*	Individual websites for each organisation CQC – latest inspection rating available on practice website: THE VILLAGE PRACTICE	
Class 4 – How we make decisions **(Decision making processes and records of decisions)** ***Current and previous year as a minimum***	On request in writing from Practice Manager	Maximum charge per sheet
Records of decisions made in the practice affecting the provision of NHS/HSC services.	On request in writing from Practice Manager	35p

Class 5 – Our policies and procedures **(Current written protocols, policies and procedures for delivering our services and responsibilities)** ***Current information only.*** ***Here we have listed the policies we would expect practices to have. Any additional policies should also be listed.*** ***Mark "not held" against any policies that are not actually held.***	On request in writing from Practice Manager	Maximum charge per sheet
Policies and procedures about customer service	On request in writing from Practice Manager	35p
Internal instructions to staff and policies relating to the delivery of services	On request in writing from Practice Manager	35p
Policies and procedures about the recruitment and employment of staff	On request in writing from Practice Manager	35p
Equality and diversity policy	On request in writing from Practice Manager	35p
Health and safety policy	On request in writing from Practice Manager	35p
Complaints procedures (including those covering requests for information and operating the publication scheme)	Website and Practice leaflet: THE VILLAGE PRACTICE	
Data protection policies – privacy notices	Practice website: THE VILLAGE PRACTICE	
Records management policies (records retention, destruction and archive)	Privacy Notice on Website And NHS Records Management Code of Practice 2021	
	Practice website:	

Policies and procedures for handling requests for information	THE VILLAGE PRACTICE	
Class 6 – Lists and Registers ***Currently maintained lists and registers only***		
We recognise that it is unlikely that GPs are going to have registers available for public inspection and while this remains the case "none held" can be entered in this section.	None held	
Any publicly available register or list *(if any are held this should be publicised; in most circumstances existing access provisions will suffice).*	None held	
Class 7 – The services we offer **(Information about the services we offer, including leaflets, guidance and newsletters produced for the public)** ***Current information only***		
The services provided under contract to the NHS/HSC	**GMS Contract** https://www.england.nhs.uk/gp/investment/gp-contract/	
Charges for any of these services	**None**	
Information leaflets	Practice website THE VILLAGE PRACTICE or on request from practice	
Out of hours arrangements	Practice website THE VILLAGE PRACTICE and telephone message when practice is closed.	