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Freedom of Information

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Commissioner steps up enforcement against public bodies over FOI

The Information Commissioner's Office has announced a series of targeted enforcement notices and practice recommendations against public authorities for failing to meet their statutory duties under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Among the bodies subject to formal action were London Borough of Enfield Council, which was issued an enforcement notice after a review found hundreds of overdue requests and unlogged cases, and Cambridge Hospitals NHS Trust, which was ordered to clear substantial backlogs after compliance rates of 14–50 % were identified in recent quarters.

The ICO also issued multiple practice recommendations to organisations including the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Trust and Northern Ireland government departments for system weaknesses in meeting FOI timeliness requirements. The regulator emphasised that these interventions were designed to drive improvements in transparency and public access to information, underscoring its commitment to upholding the public's legal right to information access.

The December enforcement push follows a period in which the ICO has signalled a more assertive regulatory posture. Over the course of 2025, the ICO has increasingly combined enforcement measures with upstream guidance and targeted compliance reviews.

In late September 2025, the ICO highlighted on Universal Access to Information Day that proactive guidance and support efforts are being paired

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Cabinet Office criticised over withdrawal of royal related records

The Cabinet Office has come under criticism after government records connected with the Duke of York were withdrawn from public release at short notice, despite having been scheduled for transfer to the National Archives under the statutory 20 year rule.

The files had initially been made available to journalists and researchers before being abruptly pulled back, with the department citing an "administrative error". The reversal has prompted accusations from transparency campaigners and historians that the public records regime is being applied inconsistently when politically sensitive or high-profile figures are involved.

The documents reportedly related to Prince Andrew's time as a UK trade envoy and included routine material such as travel arrangements and expenditure. Although early reporting suggested that much of the content was administrative in nature, critics argue that the decision to block access undermines confidence in the integrity of statutory release processes. They have questioned whether exemptions are being used too broadly, and whether sufficient independent oversight exists to prevent retrospective changes to disclosure decisions once files are

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