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Freedom of Information

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Cluster of Practice Recommendations issued over proactive publication neglect

The Information Commissioner's Office ('ICO') has issued Practice Recommendations ('PRs') to 10 public authorities for failing to comply with their proactive publication requirements.

The action follows an assessment (carried out in August 2025) of a sample of local authorities to ascertain whether they were publishing information request handling performance statistics according to the requirements of the Section 45 Code of Practice ('the Code'). As part of this assessment, the Commissioner wrote to various public authorities seeking information. In each case of the PR being issued, the authority in question confirmed it wasn't proactively publishing performance statistics.

The authorities that received a PR in April 2026 are: Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council, South Ribble Borough Council, Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council, Pendle Borough Council, Hyndburn Borough Council, Chorley Borough Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council, Cheshire East Council, Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council and Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

The incident is of wider relevance to public authorities. Section 45 of the Code states that larger public authorities (those with more than 100 full-time equivalent staff) should publish regular statistics showing how they are handling FOI requests. Although this is framed as 'best practice', in reality it is closely monitored and enforced by the ICO. A member of the public should be able to look at an authority's website and quickly understand how

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Police body's systemic failures result in Enforcement Notice

The Information Commissioner's Office has issued Gloucestershire Constabulary with an Enforcement Notice after finding a sustained and systemic failure to comply with obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The regulator concluded that the force had not been responding to FOI requests within the statutory 20 working day deadline, and that this was not an isolated issue but part of a wider and ongoing breakdown in its handling of information requests. At the time of the ICO's intervention, Gloucestershire Constabulary had accumulated a significant backlog of overdue FOI requests.

The notice records approximately 590 outstanding requests, including hundreds that were several months old and a number that had been delayed for over a year. The oldest request dated back to March 2023. The ICO highlighted that this ageing backlog demonstrated a structural failure in FOI management, rather than temporary operational pressures.

The force's overall compliance rate was described by the ICO as unacceptably low, with around a third of requests not being handled within the legal timeframe.

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