

Freedom of Information Team

Policy on Speaking Engagements

The Information Commissioner (IC) receives many requests to provide speakers for events on Freedom of Information (FOI) issues. When considering whether to accept an invitation, the IC will take into account the nature and timing of the event, the size and make-up of the audience and the extent to which participation will help promote good practice by public authorities.

The IC's objectives

The IC has a statutory duty, under section 47 of the FOI Act, to promote the following of good practice by public authorities. The IC's objectives in undertaking speaking engagements are:

- To raise awareness of the FOI Act.
- To assist public authorities in preparing for compliance with the FOI Act, by conveying the IC's thinking on FOI issues and by promoting guidance.
- To update public authorities on progress with implementation.
- To further the IC's understanding of issues affecting public authorities, or of concern to other interested parties.
- To help develop FOI networks across the public sector.

Criteria for accepting invitations

The IC will take the following factors into account:

- Whether the event addresses a wide audience. Priority will be given to events with an audience of representative or umbrella bodies or groups of public authorities, over those where a single authority is represented.
- Whether delegates have responsibility for developing policy and implementing FOI within their public authorities.
- Whether a 'key-note' speech or similar level of contribution is required by a senior member of staff.
- Whether representatives from the IC's Office are attending other FOI events during the same period.

Freedom of Information Team – Policy on Speaking Engagements

- Whether attendance is the most effective use of IC resources or whether it would be more appropriate to deliver information via alternative media.
- Whether the IC's own objectives will be furthered by participation.

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