

serving
the community
through the
administration
of justice

The Northern Ireland Court Service

Information Charter

June 2009



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

www.courtsni.gov.uk

Purpose

This Information Charter sets out the standards that you can expect from the Northern Ireland Court Service when we request or hold personal information about you. It will tell you how you can get access to your personal data and what you can do if you think that standards are not being met.

Personal information

The Data Protection Act 1998 regulates the management of personal information. For these purposes personal information, or 'data', is that which relates to living individuals. It does not include information relating to deceased persons, to groups or communities of people, or to organisations or businesses.

As a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act, the Northern Ireland Court Service has registered with the Information Commissioner's Office the purposes for which we process data. These include processing for the purposes of:

- The administration of justice;
- Crime prevention and prosecution of offenders;
- Licensing and registration;
- Non-judicial appointments;
- Accounts and records; and
- Staff administration.

Our registration with the Information Commissioner's Office can be found at its website - www.ico.gov.uk.

When we need to ask you for personal information, for any of the above purposes, we will:

- ensure that you know why we need it; ask only for what is necessary and avoid collecting too much information or data that may be considered irrelevant;
- protect it and make sure no unauthorised person has access to it;
- inform you if we share it with other organisations to give you better public services, and advise you if you have the right to refuse;
- ensure that your data is not kept longer than is necessary;
- ensure that your personal information is not made available for commercial use without your consent; and

- consider your request to stop processing data about you.

In return we ask you to:

- give us accurate information; and
- tell us as soon as possible if there are any changes to your personal circumstances, such as your address. This helps us to keep your information reliable and up-to-date.

More information

The Charter enables you to:

- find out what information we hold about you while giving you the right to ask us to correct any mistakes;
- find out about agreements that we have with other organisations for sharing information;
- be informed about the circumstances under which we can pass on personal information without telling you, for example, to help with the prevention or detection of crime, or for the production of anonymised statistics;
- be informed about the instructions we give to staff on how to collect, use or delete your personal information;
- be informed about how we check that the information we hold is accurate and up-to-date; and
- find out how to make a complaint.

For additional enquiries, please contact:

communicationsgroup@courtsni.gsi.gov.uk by e-mail or telephone 028 9041 2387. Alternatively you can write to the address given under “How to request personal information” (overleaf).

Fees

If you request your own personal data under the Data Protection Act 1998, this request is known as a ‘subject access request’ or ‘SAR’. We will provide this upon receipt of a fee of £10.00, made payable to Her Majesty’s Paymaster General. ‘HMPG’ is an acceptable abbreviation.

Fees for information in other formats

You can ask for information to be in any reasonable format and in languages other than English but there may be an additional charge for this. We will discuss the likely cost of your request with you so that you can decide if you want to proceed.

If someone else has copyright on the information you want, you may have to pay them to use it. If so, this cost will be outside our control.

Other relevant information

Where the information you are seeking is contained in files that are not appropriately structured or referenced, it may not be easy to locate and to identify whether personal information is held or being used. We keep as little 'unstructured' information as possible, since it is difficult to access and use.

If you require access to information held in these 'unstructured' manual files, you should describe the information in a way that would enable us to find it. It will help us to process your subject access request if you can be as specific as possible about what you want. Even if you describe the information, we are not obliged to provide you with access to unstructured manual data if the cost of locating and extracting the information would exceed the 'appropriate limit' as set by the Freedom of Information Act 2000. For organisations like the Northern Ireland Court Service, this is currently £600 or 24 hours of staff time.

How to request personal information

Should you wish to make a subject access request about personal data held by the Northern Ireland Court Service, you should send it to:

Information Rights & Management
Communications Group
Northern Ireland Court Service
Ground Floor, Laganside House
23-27 Oxford Street
Belfast BT1 3LA

Complaints

When we ask you for information, we will keep to the law. If however you consider that your information has been handled incorrectly, you can contact the Information Commissioner for independent advice about data protection, privacy and data sharing issues. You can contact the Information Commissioner at:

Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF
Tel: 01625 545 745
Fax: 01625 524 510
www.ico.gov.uk