

St Wulfstan Surgery

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY

POLICY

- The Practice will comply with the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act and sees it as an opportunity to enhance public trust and confidence in the Practice. The Freedom of Information Lead is Lindsay Ward, the Practice Manager.
- The Practice will maintain a comprehensive 'Publication Scheme' that provides information which is readily accessible without the need for a formal FoI Act request.
- The Practice will 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
- The Practice will continue to protect the personal data entrusted to us, by disclosing it only in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998
- The Practice will 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.
- The Practice will work with NHS Warwickshire 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.

- The Practice will 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.
- The Practice will 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
- The Practice will charge for information requests in line with the FoI Act Fees Regulations or other applicable regulations, including the Data Protection Act 1998
- The Practice will record all FoI Act requests and our responses and will monitor our performance in handling requests and complaints
- The Practice will ensure that all staff are aware of their obligations under FoI Act and will include FoI Act education in the induction of all new staff

More information about the FoI Act is at http://www.firstpracticemanagement.co.uk/misc_info/FoI_summary.htm

| The following extract from the ICO is reproduced below >>

Guide to Information provided by GPs under the model publication scheme

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 all public authorities are required to have and operate a publication scheme approved by the Information Commissioner. Doctors providing medical services under most contracts with the NHS in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are public authorities in respect of information relating to those services.

It is the intention of the Information Commissioner that all public authorities should adopt and operate the one model scheme that has been approved. This is a very general scheme based on the principal that all public authorities need to recognize the public interest in the transparency of the services provided for and paid for by the general public. It is a commitment to make information easily available to the public.

Note: The scheme is only for information held as a public authority and does not include any information that is not held, is held for other purposes or would be exempt from release.

The scheme requires three documents to be considered:

- the model scheme itself;
- our guidance on adopting and operating the scheme; and,
- a guide provided by the public authority indicating what information will be provided, how it will be provided and whether any charge will be made for its provision.

Fees should be requested only where this is done in accordance our guidance.