



Contractor Guidelines

For temporary contractors and advisors

September 2016

About the Information Commissioner

1. The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is an independent public office and the Information Commissioner is appointed by the Governor. The Information Commissioner is not subject to the direction or control of any person in the exercise of her functions to fulfil her mandate under the Public Access to Information (PATI) Act.

Mandate and Values

2. The Information Commissioner's mandate is to promote public access to information, including by raising public awareness and understanding of the rights under the PATI Act and by providing guidance to public authorities with respect to their obligations under the PATI Act.
3. The Information Commissioner fulfils this mandate by providing public education about the public's rights under the PATI Act; by providing general guidance about and oversight of public authorities' responsibilities under the PATI Act; and by hearing, investigating and ruling on requesters' appeals from public authorities' decisions about requests for records.
4. The ICO's work is guided by three core values: *independence, integrity and fairness*.

Independence

- a. We work independently of the Government and civil service to oversee compliance with the PATI Act.
- b. When carrying out her work, the Information Commissioner is not subject to the direction or control of any person.
- c. We will use the full force of the Information Commissioner's powers to promote and safeguard the right to access information.
- d. We will take action when the PATI Act and our policies say we should.
- e. We will engage in our work according to our own policies, without favour, partiality or self-interest.

Integrity

- a. We will make objective, evidence-based decisions based upon the reasoned application of the PATI Act's provisions and our policies to well-founded facts.

Fairness

- b. We will ensure thorough and timely work.
- c. Our communications will be courteous, professional and direct.
- d. When hearing reviews or conducting investigations, we will explain our findings and conclusions to the public authority and, where appropriate, to the public.

Expectations of Contractors and Technical Advisors

Confidentiality

5. As contractor or technical advisor you must be, and be seen to be, independent and honest in the exercise of your duties.
6. You must uphold the obligation to maintain confidentiality in respect of all matters, information and documents that come to your knowledge when performing your duties related to investigations, reviews and policy analysis. The ICO's public education program does not fall with the strict confidentiality requirements of section 53 of the PATI Act. The remaining work of the ICO does fall with the strict confidentiality requirements of section 53. When in doubt as to the status of your work, information or documents with respect to confidentiality, please speak to the Information Commissioner.

Computer, Phone and Other Equipment Use

7. The ICO's equipment, as well as our funding for salaries and stipends, comes from the public purse. We have a responsibility to the public to use both our time and equipment in furtherance of the public's benefit and not for our own self-interest.
8. You have been provided a computer to perform your work with at the ICO. Our computer use policy prohibits the use of ICO computers for personal activity. We understand that there may be occasions when you need to use the computer for quick, minor activities that do not involve downloading any information or documents. This is permissible during non-working hours, i.e., before work, over your break or lunch. For example, you may need to access directions to a restaurant for lunch. Your use of the ICO computers is subject to review and personal information should not be stored on the ICO computers.
9. Please save your work to your **local** drive and not the shared drives provided by the Government Information Technologies Office (ITO).
10. Your ICO email address is to be used only for your professional work. It is subject to search if the ICO receives a PATI Act request. Pending finalising of the ICO's Information and Records Management Handbook which explains our email retention policies, you should retain all emails. You should have no expectation of privacy for your ICO emails.
11. Personal use of the office phones should be kept to a minimum unless you are on a break or lunch.
12. Use of your personal phones for calls or texts during office hours should be kept to a minimum unless you are on a break or lunch.
13. Please do not use any other ICO equipment for your personal use.

Contact Records

14. All incoming and outgoing phone contacts, in-person conversations and emails that involve the ICO's programmatic work or operations (not administrative work) should be documented in a contact record. The ICO staff should not have any "off-the-record" or informal contacts with individuals outside the ICO with respect to reviews, investigations or policy work.
15. The contact record should include:
 - a. Name of contact
 - b. Date of contact
 - c. Type of contact (inquiry to ICO, consultation)
 - d. Means of contact (email or phone note or in-person meeting if meeting minutes are not available)
 - e. Subject discussed
 - f. Any agreements or decisions reached or summary line of information provided
16. For example:
 - g. Phone note: Jane Smith, 29 June 2015: inquiry about where to file a request for records about the consolidation plan for elementary schools on the East End. Provided contact details for Ministry of Education Information Officer and explained process for filing a request for records.
17. Contact records should generally be only a sentence or two. When the ICO obtains our contacts management software, all contact records will be entered into the new system.
18. All members of the public should be treated with courtesy and respect. If you are uncertain of the answer to a question, please do not guess. Politely take the individual's information and query to pass along to the Information Commissioner.

Other Obligations

19. The ICO maintains a "clean-desk" policy. This requires you to ensure that when you leave the office for lunch or the day that your hard copy working files are locked either in your desk drawers or the secure file room.
20. Upon your departure from the ICO, you will have a debrief meeting to review your ongoing confidentiality obligations and the proper recording or storing of your files, both hard copy and electronic.
21. Your contract may also be guided by other documents, such as your contractor agreement. These documents will govern issues such as your work hours, compensation, benefits, etc.
22. You will be asked to sign a log to show that you have read and understood these contractor and advisors guidelines. You will be made aware of any future amendments.

Signature Log

Please sign the log to indicate that you have read and understand the content of the contractor guidelines.

Position	Name	Signature	Date

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