



Freedom of Information request

What is a Freedom of Information request?

A Freedom of Information request (FOI) is a formal request that you can submit to your authorities (local and national) to access almost any information from a public body. This includes schools, local councils, hospitals etc. This is your right under the Freedom of Information Act (see the UK Government website for more information: <https://www.gov.uk/make-a-freedom-of-information-request>).

For your Pesticide-Free Towns campaign, an FOI could be submitted to your local council to see whether they are using pesticides in your area, how much, when and why- it is your right to know!

When to submit an FOI request

Submitting an FOI request may not always be necessary- you might be able to find the information you want simply by asking your local council/school etc.

FOIs become useful when a public body is unwilling to give you information that you have asked for politely in previous correspondence with them. They are also a useful tool because public bodies are required to respond to you with accurate and detailed written information.

How to make an FOI request

You can submit an FOI request by email, letter, or sometimes via an online form. Most councils will have information about how to submit an FOI request on their website, so make sure to check before you start putting together your request. For example Brighton

and Hove Council have an online form which you can fill in: <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/council-and-democracy/about-your-council/make-a-freedom-information-request>.

What to include in an FOI request

You should give:

- your name
- a contact address
- a detailed description of the information you want - for example, you might want all information held on a particular subject, or just a summary

You can ask for information in a particular format, such as:

- paper or electronic copies of information
- audio format
- large print

There is no limit on the number of questions you are allowed to submit, but best to keep them succinct and to a minimum, so that you get a clear response. Include the questions you want to ask but be succinct and specific! Here's an example:

- DON'T write: I read that you use pesticides all over the city. Please respond.
- DO write: is the council using pesticides in [name of town]? If so, what are the names of those pesticides and in what quantities are they used per year? Where are these pesticides used in [name of town]?

To help you put together your request we have provided a letter template on the following page. You can also download the template as an editable Word document from our website.



[Your address]

[Town/city]

[Postcode]

[Your email]

[Your telephone number]

[Public authority contact details]

[Subject title]

Dear **Sir/Madam [or] To Whom It May Concern,**

I am writing to make an open request for all the information to which I am entitled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Please send me:

[Information request - 1]

E.g. 'Please detail what pesticides you use in XXX, where, how often and for what purpose.'

[Information request - 2]

E.g. 'Has the council made any efforts to reduce the use of these pesticides? If so, please provide detail on these efforts including dates and costings where possible.'

[Information request - 3]

E.g. How many complaints does the Council get about weeds every year?

[Information request – 4, and so on]

I would like the above information to be provided to me as **[paper or electronic copies, audio-tape version or an opportunity to view]**.

If this request is too wide or unclear, I would be grateful if you could contact me as I understand that under the Act, you are required to advise and assist requesters. If any of this information is already in the public domain, please can you direct me to it, with page references and URLs as necessary.

If the release of any of this information is prohibited on the grounds of breach of confidence, I ask that you supply me with copies of the confidentiality agreement and remind you that information should not be treated as confidential if such an agreement has not been signed.

I understand that you are required to respond to my request within 20 working days after you receive this letter. I would be grateful if you could confirm in writing that you have received this request and plan to respond within the time limit.

I look forward to hearing from you.

[Your name]



It doesn't have to be this way...

Help PAN UK make our towns and cities pesticide-free

**PESTICIDE
ACTION
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