



West Yorkshire
Fire & Rescue Service

Access to Information Policy

Our Commitment to Sharing Information

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1 Our Commitment to Sharing Information

Like all public bodies, West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority is governed by legislation which means that we must make information publicly available. This legislation includes:

- the Freedom of Information Act 2000
- the Data Protection Act 1998
- the Environmental Information Regulations 2004

Through Our Commitment to Sharing Information, we intend not only to fulfil our legal obligations, but also to promote a spirit of openness and accessibility.

By doing so, we hope people can access the information they want, when they want it, and can use it to lead safer lives. This will help us to serve the public better in line with our aim “provide an excellent Fire and Rescue Service that works in partnership with others to reduce death, injury and property loss due to fire and other emergencies”, and our ambition of “Making West Yorkshire Safer”.

2 Purpose

This Policy describes West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority’s approach to making information available to the public and details our commitment to sharing information; to making it available to anyone who is interested in it.

This policy complements our Publication Scheme, which is available on our website or by contacting the Information Management Officer, whose details are given at the end of this document.

3 Scope

This policy covers all information held by West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority. We cannot share all of this information – even when it is requested – but whenever we can share it, we will.

West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority makes information available through many different means, including via the website, booklets, leaflets, CDs, letters and e-mails. The policy covers all these channels of communicating information.

The policy sets out 12 commitments which we believe will help us to serve the community in West Yorkshire.

The policy does not in any way limit or otherwise affect our legal obligations, and does not describe the procedures by which we will handle Freedom of Information requests, or requests made under the Data Protection Act – it describes our attitude towards sharing information.

The procedure for dealing with Freedom of Information requests can be found on our website, or by contacting the Information Management Officer, whose details are given at the end of this document.

4 Our Commitments

4.1 **Commitment 1 – We will share information proactively (we will make information available without being asked)**

We try to present information in the public domain before we are asked for it. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 is all about openness, transparency and sharing information. We believe that the best response to a Freedom of Information Request is one which states we already publish the information – or that we are just about to. We will continue to look for new ways of publishing information in a way that is useful and helpful to the public.

4.2 **Commitment 2 - We will use your requests to improve and develop the service we provide**

When we make information available, we try to foresee what is useful, helpful and interesting to you. When we get requests for information we have not previously shared, we will try to find a way of making the information more widely available.

4.3 **Commitment 3 – We will try to share the right information**

We want to ensure that interested people can get to the information they want with ease, without having to search through material which is irrelevant and possibly of little interest. It is in our interests, too, that we avoid sharing too much or too little information.

So, if you struggle to find the information you need please let us know. Likewise, if you receive a response to a request and you cannot find the information you want in it, then please contact the person who responded to your request to discuss it.

4.4 **Commitment 4 – We want everyone at West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority to be committed to providing quality information**

We try to ensure that these commitments are shared by everyone at West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority, and have made this document available throughout our organisation.

4.5 **Commitment 5 – We will review and revise our Publication Scheme**

We are committed to making sure that our Publication Scheme is as up-to-date as possible: we will therefore incorporate changes into our publication scheme and formally review it every year, publishing a new version in the event of any major change.

4.6 **Commitment 6 – We will make information available in plain language**

We want to share information in clear language. We aim to write sentences which are easily understood.

We will always try to use language which respects and reflects the diversity of the public we serve, and we carry out Equality Impact Assessments on all of our policies and procedures, including this one.

We will make translation services for other languages available upon reasonable request. Large type versions, braille versions and audio versions on CD and DVD will also be made available on request.

We will continue to use the services of outreach workers to ensure key messages are delivered to the whole community, including people with disabilities and people who do not speak English.

When responding to Freedom of Information requests, we will reply in English unless we are requested to provide it in another language. If you require information to be provided in any other language we will try to accommodate this, although in some cases we may charge a fee to cover translation costs.

4.7 Commitment 7 – We will make as much as possible of this information available to as many people as possible via our website

We aim to make the website accessible to all users and therefore follow standards and government guidelines to ensure that this site can be used as effectively and easily as possible by everyone. We endeavour to ensure our website is compliant with the Disability Rights Commission's "Guide to good practice in commissioning accessible websites".

4.7.1 Accessibility Standards

The website has been built to comply with all of Priority 1 and 2 accessibility checkpoints as established in the World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) web accessibility initiative (WAI). The WAI promotes usability and accessibility for people with disabilities. The W3C promotes good practice amongst the web community via initiatives like WAI Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0.

4.7.2 Text Only

We aim to provide the best possible user experience for all users on all devices. The majority of the pages on the website have text only versions. These are high contrast sizable text versions.

4.7.3 Finding documents

We know you will want to get to parts of our website from a single portal or search engine. We will ensure that our documents meet Government standards, so that people can find information and services without having to know our website address, or the full web address for an individual document.

4.7.4 Additional Help

We will continue to explore means of making the information accessible for people who have a good understanding of the English language, but do not find reading easy. These are sometimes known as Assistive Technologies.

4.7.5 Feedback

We will continue to provide a compliments and complaints process and contact details so you can get in touch with us easily when you want more information. In doing so we aim to ensure that our website respects and reflects the differing needs of the community we serve.

4.8 Commitment 8 – We will respect the interests and wishes of third parties

Whilst we want to share as much information as possible with all interested parties, we also need to respect the privacy and wishes of individuals. Whenever we need to provide the details of a third party – for example, when we respond to a Freedom of Information Request - we will try to contact them first.

4.9 Commitment 9 – We will respond in a timely way

When we respond to requests for information, we do so as quickly as we can. Our own internal procedures are geared towards getting back to you within 10 days, and in any case, within legal time limits.

When we cannot quickly provide you with all of the information you want straight away, we will let you have as much as we can as early as possible, and share the rest of the information later. If you require information to be provided in a language other than English, we may need extra time to allow for translations.

4.10 Commitment 10 – We will try to help, even if we cannot give you the information you want

Although we cannot provide information if we do not hold it, where resources allow, we will try to suggest alternative sources of information.

We will always try to share information, but sometimes there are legal reasons preventing us from doing so.

If you ask for information we cannot provide, we will send a refusal within the legal deadline and tell you how you can appeal against our decision.

4.11 Commitment 11 - We will try to make information available free of charge

Under some circumstances, we can by law charge for making information available. We like to think, however, that if information should be available publicly, it should be available free of charge. We will therefore try to avoid charging for information wherever possible.

4.12 Commitment 12 - We will review this policy to make sure it serves you well

We will formally review this policy at least every 3 years, and also whenever we think there might be any significant improvements to make to the policy. This will include incorporating the feedback you have provided.

5 Contact Details

For more information on how we make information available to the public, please contact:

Information Management Officer
Corporate Services
Oakroyd Hall
Birkenshaw
BD11 2DY

Telephone: 01274 473787

Email: information@westyorksfire.gov.uk

