Freedom of Information: Public Access, Public Rights

What This Course Is About
This course is designed to equip and enable public authorities and their employees with the knowledge and practical decision making skill needed to ensure consistent compliance with FOI requirements

Who Should Attend
Anyone working in the public sector who handles public requests for information or advises on the handling of such requests including customer-facing staff and their managers; Heads of Service or Department; in-house legal advisors; Public Relations staff; Data Protection Officers and Information Officers

Benefits For Your Organisation
Reduced risk of non-compliance; improved records management practice; increased efficiency and effectiveness in request handling; increased openness about policy making, leading to increased public confidence and trust.

Course Content

- **Access to information laws – the basics**
  Briefing/discussion of FOI key points and the relationship with other information access laws

- **FOI – do you know the rules?**
  Analysis and application of FOI rules to a range of different request scenarios

- **Request filtering process**
  Practice in sorting requests and identifying those which must be handled under FOI

- **First impressions – identifying the key issues**
  Case study practice in analysing and making initial assessments with regard to the work and issues involved in handling requests

- **FOI key do's and don'ts**
  Spot the mistake exercises to discuss and agree what is and is not acceptable FOI handling practice

- **Weighing up the public interest**
  Scenario-based discussions to examine how the public interest test might apply in a range of situations

- **Practitioners' forum**
  Working together to resolve specific real cases

- **Dealing with difficult FOI decisions**
  Practice in groups using decision making tools and complex case studies.

Learning Outcomes

Participants will be able to:

- Explain the role and function of freedom of information and other access to information laws

- Explain the operational implications of such laws for public authorities and their employees

- Apply access to information principles correctly and effectively in their work

- Identify and distinguish between FOI requests and other types of information request

- Assess all requests effectively and respond accordingly, in compliance with FOI requirements.

Learning Delivery

Courses run for ½, 1 or 2 days, include pre- and post-course assessments and are practical in their approach, using the following delivery methods:

- Group discussions

- Quizzes

- E-mail in-box analysis exercises

- Case study analysis

- Real case problem solving.

A 2 hour briefing session and guidance on FOI policy and procedures are also available.