

Report to:	QSMTM
Report by:	Claire Stephen, Head of Policy and Information
Meeting Date:	14 August 2025
Subject/ Title: (and VC no)	Policy and Information Team Assurance Report
Attached Papers (title and VC no)	None

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this Committee Report (CR) is to provide assurance that the Policy and Information Team are monitoring Publication Scheme adoptions in line with KPIs and that feedback from events and training is line with objectives.

Recommendation and actions

2. I recommend
 - (i) the Senior Management Team (SMT) notes the CR and the assurance provided in paragraph 11
 - (ii) this CR is published in accordance with paragraph 26

Executive summary

Publication Schemes

3. The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA) requires Scottish public authorities to adopt and maintain a publication scheme. Authorities are under a legal obligation to: (i) publish the classes of information that they make routinely available (ii) tell the public how to access the information they publish and whether information is available free of charge or on payment. 2. FOISA also allows for the development of model publication schemes which can be adopted by more than one authority.
4. Almost all Scottish Public Authorities adopt our Model Scheme.
5. The Policy and Information team are responsible for monitoring the landscape to identify new bodies, ensuring new bodies either create their own publication scheme or notify us that they have adopted the Model Scheme and ensure that they are aware of their additional duties under the Act.
6. In 2024/25, we supported the Scottish Pub Code Adjudicator, Zero Waste Scotland and the Smart Data Foundry Ltd adopt the Model scheme. All adoptions were made within our set timeframes.
7. We continue to monitor new bodies being created through legislation and where possible, we also carry out interventions with authorities if issues with their publication schemes are identified.

Events and conferences

8. Throughout the year, we supported a range of conferences and events, including an FOI Practitioners' Conference organised by Dundee Law School's Centre for FOI, an annual Holyrood FOI Conference, and an eCase FOI Awards Conference, held this year in London. The latter celebrated best practice in FOI implementation across the UK, with a Scottish public authority winning 'Practitioner of the Year' and being named runner-up for 'Team of the Year.'
9. We also marked the 20th anniversary of FOI (and the 40th anniversary of the Campaign for Freedom of Information in Scotland) with a special event in Glasgow, in partnership with the Campaign. Internationally, the Commissioner attended the ICIC Conference in Albania and visited Ukraine for an International Conference on access to information in times of crisis.
10. We worked throughout the year to support public authorities to develop and improve their FOI performance, through the sharing of good practice and the development of events and engagements designed to drive improvement. Activities carried out across 2024-25 included:
 - A discussion at the Scottish Government Directors Meeting featuring Commissioner David Hamilton discussing the importance of timely, accurate and considered FOI responses.
 - The development of a series of 'Get It Right First Time' lunchtime webinars for public bodies, designed to introduce, explain and encourage best practice in relation to our new appeal processes. More than 300 FOI practitioners attended the webinars, with 98% reporting a better understanding of the process as a result.
 - The development of a workshop focussed on sharing good practice in FOI reviews at the 2024 Holyrood FOI conference
 - Providing expert advice in a number of free webinars in partnership with eCase, including an 'FOI clinic' session, alongside sessions on reducing appeals and responding to complaints.
 - Developing an EIR-focussed workshop in partnership with the UK Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) as part of the ICO's annual data protection conference.
 - Providing updates, advice and good practice information at public authority staff network meetings, including the Scottish Government Case-handling Network, Social Security Scotland's information governance group and the Society of Local Authority Lawyers and Administrators in Scotland (SOLAR) conference.

Assurance

11. I am able to provide the following assurance:
 - we are monitoring the landscape and supporting the adoption of publication schemes and addressing deficiencies in publication scheme duties when identified.
 - we are actively engaging in as many events and opportunities as resources allow. With regard to events that we have delivered, feedback received has been in line with the objectives of the event.
 - the GRA requirements regarding assurance are met by way of this CR

Risk impact

12. This annual review and assurance report are controls in place to ensure that the impact of the operational risk relating to the failure to meet operational objectives

Equalities impact

13. There is no direct equalities impact arising from this review.

Privacy impact

14. There is no privacy impact arising from this review.

Resources impact

15. There is no resource impact arising from this review.

Operational/ strategic plan impact

16. None arising from this report.

Records management impact (including any key documents actions)

17. None arising from this report.

Consultation and Communication

18. MSMTM minute.

Publication

19. This CR should be published in full.