



## Freedom of Information Officer (Policy & Information Team)

### Job description and person specification

<b>Grade:</b>	4 (full time equivalent (FTE) – 37 hours)
<b>Starting salary:</b>	£45,428 (gross p.a.) FTE on a scale rising to £54,166 (gross p.a.) FTE
<b>Term:</b>	12 months fixed term appointment
<b>Reports to:</b>	Deputy Head of Policy & Information

**Applications on a job share basis are welcome and flexible working arrangements are available.**

### Background

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The Scottish Information Commissioner (the Commissioner) promotes and enforces the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA) and the Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004 (the EIRs).

This legislation generates tens of thousands of requests for information to Scotland's public authorities. These often involve high profile, controversial or sensitive matters. If requesters are dissatisfied with the response they receive from an authority, they can appeal to the Scottish Information Commissioner who will determine whether information should be disclosed. Around 500 appeals are made to the Commissioner each year.

The Commissioner has statutory duties to promote Freedom of Information (FOI) law, contributing to openness and transparency in Scottish public authorities. He approves authorities' plans (publication schemes) to publish information and promotes FOI rights to the public and good FOI practice to authorities. Where an authority's FOI performance is not compliant he may make an intervention.

### Purpose of Job

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You will join a team that provides support to the Commissioner to fulfil his duties to promote FOI rights and FOI good practice. We support the Commissioner to:

- engage with key stakeholders and decision makers (including the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government)
- share widely the learning from our enforcement work

- develop best practice in access to information held by Scottish public authorities.

Our work is interesting and varied and involves regular contact with the public, public authorities, journalists and non-governmental organisations. Examples of our current work include:

- promoting publication and positive actions to increase openness
- improving the Commissioner's website to help users navigate to the content they want to see
- internal reporting of any evidence of authority non-compliance to inform interventions
- drafting consultation responses to proposals for legislation
- preparing projects to raise FOI awareness, for example, case studies
- organising learning and awareness events for both public authority FOI practitioners and users, or potential users, of FOI.

## **Responsibilities**

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As a member of the Policy and Information Team you will have specific responsibilities for a number of the work areas listed below.

### **Public Affairs**

- Supporting well-informed decision-making by providing briefings on policy areas and new FOI developments
- Collecting and analysing data from a range of sources to evidence the impact of the Commissioner's work and emerging priorities
- Supporting the Commissioner's participation in the legislative processes of the Scottish Parliament, identifying priorities and drafting reports and consultation responses
- Promoting openness and transparency through positive relationships with a range of stakeholders

### **Promoting FOI rights to the public**

- Identifying and providing learning opportunities and training to users and potential users of FOI law to support effective use of FOI rights
- Producing guidance, case studies and other support materials for publication through a variety of platforms including websites and social media.
- Identifying opportunities to reach under-represented demographics.

### **FOI good practice**

- Providing learning opportunities and training to public authorities and other key stakeholders to support good FOI practice
- Liaising with FOI practitioner groups to support FOI networking, learning and best practice

## FOI guidance

- Explaining legal concepts and the Commissioner's decisions in a clear and understandable way that is both appropriate to the audience and promotes good practice.
- Developing guidance in light of new challenges and emerging precedent.

## Publication Schemes/Proactive publication

- Producing guidance for public authorities and offering advice on the effective proactive publication of information
- Developing innovative methods to ensure compliance by public authorities with the FOI duty to publish information

## Other Duties

Most of your time will be spent on the above areas of work, but you may also be required to undertake other duties such as:

- Responding to general enquiries to the office and requests for information
- Managing projects
- Supporting events and activities

## Person Specification

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### Experience

You will have experience in a work environment of providing briefings, conducting research, analysing complex information, writing reports and making carefully argued recommendations based on your work.

You will have excellent writing, communication and presentational skills, including the ability to speak to, and write for, a range of audiences. You must be able to present complex technical information clearly and accurately, and in a way that each audience will understand, e.g. using plain-English, where appropriate.

Your sound research skills mean you can gather and analyse both statistical data and other information to present it in summary form and reports. You will be able to identify, locate and verify online information quickly and confidently.

You will be able to show that you can analyse complex situations and use your judgement to make recommendations to the Commissioner. You will have the interpersonal skills needed to work constructively, positively and effectively with a wide variety of people.

You will have experience of working with the public and public sector organisations.

You will be able to work well under the pressure of a varied workload which requires you to both deliver accurate work and meet deadlines. You will welcome new challenges, applying your knowledge and skills to different ways of working. You will also be a strong team-player, working constructively and supportively with colleagues to help achieve organisational objectives.

It is desirable that you have a good knowledge of FOI law and an appreciation of the political, legal and practical issues around freedom of information.

It is also desirable that you have a good working knowledge of the functions and work of central government, particularly the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament, and an understanding of the structure and operation of public bodies in Scotland.

You will be computer literate and able to demonstrate a good working knowledge of, and confidence in the use of, Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint. You will be accustomed to using spreadsheets for statistical analysis. It is essential that you have experience of preparing clear and engaging content for websites newsletters and social media.

You must have strong digital skills. You should be willing to use digital applications including electronic records management, case management and website content management software (training will be given).

### **Essential Criteria**

- Educated to degree level or equivalent level of skill, knowledge or experience.
- Relevant work experience providing briefings, conducting research, analysing complex information, writing reports and making carefully argued recommendations based on your work.
- Excellent writing, presentation and communication skills, including the ability to write for, or speak to, a range of audiences.
- Sound analytical and research skills.
- Able to identify, locate and verify online information sources quickly and confidently.
- Problem-solving skills.
- Good interpersonal and team-working skills (including working with other teams).
- Sound time-management skills, the ability to plan your work and manage competing priorities.
- Commitment to providing a high-quality service.
- Computer literate and able to demonstrate a good working knowledge of and be confident in using applications such as Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint and MS Teams. You will have a good working knowledge of Microsoft Outlook and of carrying out online research and be able to use electronic records management and case management software (training will be given).
- Confident in developing and the delivery content for websites, newsletters and social media

### **Desirable Criteria**

- Experience of working with legislation, ideally freedom of information legislation.
- Good working knowledge of the functions and work of central government and the public sector in Scotland.

- Knowledge of the political, legal and practical issues around freedom of information.
- Experience of providing advice to members of the public, public authorities and journalists.
- Experience of records management.
- Practical experience of working with data protection legislation and how it impacts on FOISA and the EIRs (or similar).