

Northern Ireland Audit Office

Freedom of Information Publication Scheme

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Welcome to the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) Freedom of Information Publication Scheme, which has been produced under Section 19 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the “Act”) and approved by the Information Commissioner.
- 1.2 The Act gives a general right of access to all types of recorded information held by public authorities from January 2005, sets out exemptions from that right and places a number of obligations on public authorities. It requires every public authority to adopt and maintain a publication scheme which will detail types of information to be made routinely available. A publication scheme must set out the classes of information contained within the scheme.
- 1.3 The purpose of the NIAO Publication Scheme, in compliance with the Act, is to inform you:
 - about the classes of information that we publish or intend to publish;
 - how this information can be accessed; and
 - whether it is available free of charge or on payment.

2. Background Information about the NIAO

- 2.1 The Comptroller and Audit General for Northern Ireland (C&AG), who is head of the NIAO, is responsible for the external audit of central government bodies in Northern Ireland, including Northern Ireland Departments and their Executive Agencies and a wide range of other public sector bodies, including Executive Non-Departmental Public Bodies and health and personal social service bodies. He undertakes financial audit and value for money audit and the results of his work are reported to the Northern Ireland Assembly, and to Parliament during the suspension of devolution.
- 2.2 The NIAO supports the C&AG in fulfilling his responsibilities. Certain NIAO staff are also designated by the Department of the Environment as local government auditors. Local government auditors are responsible for the audit of Northern Ireland District Councils.

- 2.3 The C&AG and the NIAO are wholly independent of Government.
- 2.4 The status, functions and main duties of the C&AG and the NIAO are set down in legislation, including the Audit (Northern Ireland) Order 1987, the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Government Resources and Accounts Act (Northern Ireland) 2001 and the Audit and Accountability (Northern Ireland) Order 2003. The principal legislative authority for the responsibilities of local government auditors is contained in the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972.
- 2.5 The vision of the NIAO is to promote accountability and the best use of public money. To achieve this the Office aims to :
- provide objective information, advice and assurance on the use of public funds; and
 - encourage:
 - beneficial change in the provision of public services;
 - the highest standards in financial management and reporting; and
 - propriety in the conduct of public business.

3. Responsibility for the Publication Scheme

- 3.1 Overall responsibility for our Publication Scheme rests with the Director, Central Division. Contact details for the Officer responsible for the day to day operation of the Scheme are set out in Section 5.2(3).

4. Information Classes

- 4.1 The Scheme sets out the information that we will routinely make available. The information is organised into classes within the following categories:

Information regarding reporting on financial statements

Information regarding value for money and performance reports

Public Interest Disclosure (NI) Order work (whistleblowing)

Internal Administration

4.2 The classes of information, which are specified in Section 12 of this Scheme, were reviewed with senior management with specific regard to the public interest.

5. Availability of information

5.1 The NIAO aims, wherever possible, to provide an easy method of accessing the information listed in its Publication Scheme.

5.2 The information may be made available in various formats:

(1) On the NIAO website

Address: <http://www.niauditoffice.gov.uk>

Documents on our website are available in Portable Document Format (PDF) or as text documents. To read PDF documents you will need Adobe Acrobat Reader, which is readily available from the Adobe web site www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep.html.

(2) Purchased from The Stationery Office

Contact details for orders:

Website address: <http://www.tso.co.uk/bookshop>
or through:

The Publications Centre: PO Box 29, Norwich NR3 1GN

General Enquiries: 0870 600 5522

Fax orders: 0870 600 5533

(3) On request

Requests for information can be made in writing by post, fax or email to, or by telephoning:

**Norma Connelly
Northern Ireland Audit Office
106 University Street
Belfast BT7 1EU**

Telephone No. (028) 90 251068
Fax No. (028) 90 251106 or 251051
E-mail: info@niauditoffice.gov.uk

- 5.3 How to access information will be clearly stated under the relevant Class.
- 5.4 The NIAO is committed to ensuring that the information it disseminates is made accessible in a way which recognises equality of opportunity. In line with the NIAO Equality Scheme prepared under the Northern Ireland Act 1998, a summary of the Publication Scheme will be made available on request in accessible formats.

6. Charges

- 6.1 Our Publication Scheme details within each class whether information is available free of charge or on payment.
- 6.2 Information available on our website is available free of charge – ie there is no charge by us, although the user has to meet any charges by their Internet Service Provider, personal printing costs etc.
- 6.3 For those who do not have access to the Internet, a single printout of a document on the website will be available on request. Requests for multiple copies of a document, as on the website, or archived copies of documents which are no longer available on the website may attract a charge for the cost of retrieval, photocopies, postage etc.
- 6.4 For information which we have indicated in the Scheme is available as a hard copy (excluding documents available from The Stationery Office – see paragraph 6.6 below), a single copy will be available on request. Requests for multiple copies may attract a charge for the cost of retrieval, photocopies, postage etc.
- 6.5 We would advise of any charge at the time of the request and this would be payable in advance.
- 6.6 The Scheme indicates where priced copies of documents are available from The Stationery Office.

7. Exempt information

- 7.1 Provision is made in the Act for some information to be deemed exempt from disclosure, typically for security or confidentiality reasons, or where the health and safety of staff is at risk or where personal data is involved. Exemptions under the Act may prevent some of the NIAO's information being released. Where we consider material within a class to contain exempt information, the material will be withheld.

8 Copyright

- 8.1 Unless otherwise stated, the material available in this Publication Scheme is subject to NIAO copyright.
- 8.2 Material available on the NIAO website may be downloaded, copied or reproduced free of charge in any format or medium without requiring specific permission. This is subject to the material being reproduced accurately and not being used in a derogatory manner or in a misleading context. Where this material is being published or issued to others, the source and copyright status must be acknowledged. This permission to reproduce NIAO material does not extend to any material identified as being the Copyright of a third party. Authorisation to reproduce such material must be obtained from the copyright holders concerned.
- 8.3 Before downloading any material from our website, reference should be made to our copyright statement.

9 Right to Information

- 9.1 The general right of access to the information held by a public authority is provided for under section 1 of the Act. Any person wishing to exercise this right, which will come into force in January 2005, will have to make a written request to the public authority. Subject to exemptions, any person who makes such a request must be informed whether the public authority holds that information. Fees may be chargeable. There is no obligation to provide information if the estimated cost of doing so would exceed an appropriate limit.

9.2 If from January 2005, you want information which is not available under the NIAO Publication Scheme, you may write to the contact notified at Section 5.2(3).

10 Complaints

10.1 If you are not satisfied with the way we have dealt with a request, you may follow a complaints procedure. In the first instance, complaints should be sent in writing or by e-mail to the contact notified at Section 5.2(3). If you are not satisfied with any subsequent response you may write to the Information Commissioner, who will investigate the matter further. The Information Commissioner will expect you to have tried to resolve the matter through our internal procedures before approaching him.

10.2 The contact details for the Information Commissioner, who is responsible for the enforcement of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998, are:

Information Commissioner
Wycliffe Lane
WILMSLOW
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Tel:01625 545 745
Fax: 01625 524 510
Email:data@dataprotection.gov.uk

11. Feedback

11.1 We would be interested to hear any comments you may have about our Scheme. These should be sent to the contact notified at Section 5.2(3).

12. Detailed Scheme

12.1 Classes of information within each category are listed below.

Category: Information regarding reporting on financial statements

Class	<u>C&AG Reports on audited accounts.</u>
Definition	The final audit opinion of the C&AG on clients' accounts where the NIAO has statutory responsibility for publishing those accounts. This will include a copy of the accounts, the audit certificate and any separate C&AG Report on the audit.
Formats available	Electronic on NIAO website for the most recent annual audited accounts (commencing with the 2003-04 accounts). Hard copy versions of these reports, and earlier reports can be purchased from The Stationery Office.
Cost	Free on NIAO website. Hard copies as priced by TSO.

Class	<u>Press Notices relating to audited accounts</u>
Definition	The NIAO will sometimes produce a Press Notice relating to reports on audited accounts.
Formats available	Electronic on NIAO website from 1994.
Cost	Free

Class	<u>List of accounts audited by the C&AG</u>
Definition	A list of all the accounts that the C&AG audits in any financial year.
Formats available	Electronic on NIAO website.
Cost	Free

Class	<u>List of accounts audited by the Local Government Auditors</u>
Definition	A list of all the accounts that designated Local Government Auditors audit in any financial year.
Formats available	Electronic on NIAO website.
Cost	Free

Category: Information regarding value for money and performance audit reports

Class	<u>Published C&AG Reports</u>
Definition	Published Reports by the C&AG to the Northern Ireland Assembly/Parliament on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which departments and other bodies have used their resources ('Value for Money' reports).
Formats	Electronic on NIAO website from 2002.

available	Hard copy versions of these reports, and reports from earlier years can be purchased from The Stationery Office.
Cost	Free on NIAO website. Hard copies as priced by TSO.

Class	Press Notices
Definition	A brief summary of the findings and recommendations of published 'Value for Money' (VFM) Reports.
Formats available	Electronic on NIAO website from 1994.
Cost	Free

Class	Work in progress
Definition	A summary of the C&AG's current 'Value for Money' (VFM) studies in progress setting out the issues that will be addressed with details of study team contacts and expected publication dates. Please note that certain exemptions may apply. Summaries will be withheld or edited where sensitive or confidential matters are discussed.
Formats available	Electronic on NIAO website.
Cost	Free

Category: Public Interest Disclosure (Northern Ireland) Order work (whistleblowing)

Class	Outline of whistleblowing role and procedures
Definition	Outline of the role of the Comptroller and Auditor General and Local Government Auditors as persons to whom external disclosures can be made under the Public Interest Disclosure (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 and details of how to make a disclosure.
Formats available	Electronic on NIAO website.
Cost	Free

Category: Internal administration

Class	Corporate Plan
Definition	Sets out the main features of the NIAO's strategy for the next three years.
Formats available	Current plan available electronically from the NIAO website.
Cost	Free

Class	<u>Senior Management Group Meetings - Agendas and Summary Minutes</u>
Definition	Agendas and summary record of the meetings of the Senior Management Group which oversees the Office's activities and advises the Comptroller and Auditor General on the discharge of his statutory duties.
Formats available	January 2004 onwards available electronically from the NIAO website.
Cost	Free

Class	<u>Audit Committee Meetings - Agendas and Summary Minutes</u>
Definition	Agendas and summary record of the committee's meetings. This committee is chaired by an independent, non-executive chair and is responsible for overseeing the NIAO's external and internal audit arrangements.
Formats available	Available electronically from the NIAO website from 2004 onwards.
Cost	Free

Class	<u>Purchasing Guidance</u>
Definition	Current guidance to NIAO staff who are involved in procurement.
Formats available	Available electronically from the NIAO website from 1 st January 2005.
Cost	Free

Class	<u>NIAO Budgets: Estimates</u>
Definition	The NIAO annually produces an Estimate of its resource requirements. This shows our planned net expenditure on goods and services.
Formats available	Current Estimate available electronically on NIAO website. Previous years available from The Stationery Office.
Cost	Free on NIAO website. Priced by TSO

Class	<u>NIAO Budgets: Accounts</u>
Definition	The NIAO produces a Resource Account annually to record the use of goods and services.
Formats available	Current audited Resource Account available electronically on NIAO website. Hard copies can be purchased from The Stationery Office.
Cost	Free on NIAO website. Priced by TSO.

Class	<u>Current vacancies</u>
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Definition	Details of current externally advertised vacancies, including job specification.
Formats available	Electronic on NIAO website
Cost	Free

Class	<u>Job Descriptions</u>
Definition	Current standard job descriptions for NIAO staff.
Formats available	Electronic on NIAO website.
Cost	Free

Class	<u>Management of NIAO records</u>
Definition	Outline of current file management system for NIAO records.
Formats available	Electronic on NIAO website.
Cost	Free

Class	<u>Health and Safety Policy</u>
Definition	Sets out the NIAO's current Health and Safety Policy containing notice of commitment to full compliance with all relevant health and safety legislative requirements and details of the management hierarchy for health and safety responsibility.
Formats available	Electronic on NIAO website
Cost	Free

Class	<u>Data Protection Policy</u>
Definition	Current guidance to NIAO staff on the Data Protection Act 1998.
Formats available	Electronic on NIAO website
Cost	Free

Class	<u>NIAO Equality Scheme and Summary</u>
Definition	Current Equality Scheme and associated Summary setting out how the NIAO proposes to meet the requirements of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.
Formats available	Electronic on NIAO website.
Cost	Free
Class	<u>Where to find us</u>
Definition	Current office addresses, telephone numbers, fax numbers
Formats available	Electronic on NIAO website

Cost	Free
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Class	Senior Management Contact Information
Definition	Names, contact details and brief details of responsibilities of the current Senior Management Group
Formats available	Electronic on NIAO website.
Cost	Free