



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, members of the public have a general right of access to all recorded information held by public organisations, including colleges of further education.
- 1.2 Any person has the right to ask if a particular piece of information is held by the College and to request a copy of that information.
- 1.3 Riverside College Halton seeks to ensure that it operates in an open and transparent manner, dealing satisfactorily with requests and readily providing information to the public.

2 GENERAL

- 2.1 Public organisations are obliged to have a Public Information Disclosure Scheme and this has to be formally registered with the Information Commissioner's Office. The College's Publication Scheme is contained at Appendix 1.
- 2.2 The Publication Scheme outlines the kinds of information held by the College and how each of these may be accessed. The Scheme is available to the public through the College's website (www.riversidecollege.ac.uk). Electronic and paper copies of documentation are available on request. The majority of information will be provided free, however, a charge may be payable for some information.

3 DATA PROTECTION

- 3.1 Whilst the College will endeavour to be as open as possible in terms of the information it makes available, there are certain categories of information that are exempt from the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (2000), which allow for information to be withheld or qualified.

- 3.2 The exemptions include personal information deemed to be sensitive under the Data Protection Act 1998 and information where a public interest test applies.
- 3.3 The management of personal and sensitive information will be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act, which shall supersede the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act.
- 3.4 Breaches of confidentiality of personal and sensitive information by any employee may lead to disciplinary action under the College's staff disciplinary procedure (available from the Human Resources Department).

4 CONFIDENTIALITY

- 4.1 The College's Board of Governors has established a number of categories for determining the confidentiality for its own proceedings. Records of such discussions are recorded separately and will not be made publicly available. The following matters will be assessed as confidential and treated in this manner:
 - 4.1.1 Personal information relating to an individual;
 - 4.1.2 Information provided in confidence by a third party who has not authorised its disclosure;
 - 4.1.3 Financial or other information relating to procurement decisions during the course of those negotiations;
 - 4.1.4 Information relating to personnel matters during the course of negotiations;
 - 4.1.5 Information relating to the financial position of the College where the Board of Governors is satisfied in good faith that disclosure may harm the College;
 - 4.1.6 Legal advice received from or instructions given to the College's legal advisers;
 - 4.1.7 Information planned for publication in advance of that publication;
 - 4.1.8 Commercially sensitive material or information.
- 4.2 After the end of each academic year, the Clerk will review all items that have been classified as confidential under the Board's procedures and will make recommendations to the Board (through the Search Committee) as to whether these can now be released into the non-confidential record of the Board's business.
- 4.3 The Board has determined that attendance at its meetings by the general public or the media is not permitted. However, the records of the Board's non-confidential business are available for public inspection at the Principalship Office of the Kingsway Campus. Minutes of the non-confidential part of the Board's proceedings are also posted on the College's website, in accordance with the requirements of the Articles of Government.

- 4.4 In a similar manner, certain aspects of discussions of the Senior Management Team, College Management Team and other committees will be assessed as confidential. Discussions relating to individual learners or members of staff will not be released to third parties, in line with the provisions of the Data Protection Act.

5 REGISTER OF INTERESTS

All governors and managers with significant budgetary responsibility are required to complete an annual declaration of interest form. These are kept on file by the Clerk to the Governors and can be inspected during office hours Monday to Thursday at the Principalship Office, Riverside College Halton, Kingsway Campus, Kingsway, Widnes WA8 7QQ.

6 PROCEDURES

- 6.1 All requests for information that is not readily available through the College's website should be made in writing to:

Lesley Venables
Freedom of Information Officer / Clerk to the Governors
Riverside College Halton
Kingsway Campus
Kingsway
Widnes WA8 7QQ
Tel 0151-257-2034
lesley.venables@riversidecollege.ac.uk

- 6.2 A response to requests will normally be made within 20 working days.
- 6.3 The College will provide free of charge printed information on courses and services offered, together with recruitment packs for advertised job vacancies. Publications and documents will be produced in other formats where it is reasonably practical to do so. For items not routinely available or for items in other requested formats which incur additional costs, the College reserves the right to make a charge.

6.4 Charges will be calculated based on the time spent researching and collecting the information requested and will be made at £25 per hour. There is no obligation for the College to disclose the information if the total cost exceeds £450. In certain circumstances, the College may waive the fee at its absolute discretion.

6.5 If the College is unable to resolve a complaint regarding the provision of information under the Freedom of Information Act, enquirers have the right to complain to the Office of the Information Commissioner, whose address is:

Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF

7 REVIEW / MONITORING

7.1 Both the policy and the Scheme will be reviewed on a regular basis by the Clerk to the Governors. Any amendments will be submitted to the Senior Management Team for approval.

7.2 An annual report on the number of Freedom of Information requests will be made to the Senior Management Team in the Autumn Term of each academic year, including details as to whether the request was satisfied and any disputes or issues.

Completed By	Date	Review Date	Approval By
Clerk to the Governors	October 2011	July 2012	SMT