

FOI charging guidelines

The following can be charged to the person making the request:

- the direct and indirect costs in locating, retrieving and providing the information;
- the cost of editing or redacting documents once a decision is made to disclose or redact parts;
- the cost for making summary or digesting of information, if this is what is requested; and
- postage and packaging

We cannot charge for deciding whether or not we hold the information or for deciding whether any exemptions apply, including the cost of obtaining legal advice.

The total cost is calculated based on the number of hours required to complete the request, with a limit of £15 per person per hour for staff time, plus reasonable photocopying costs. The hourly rate implies a fully loaded staff cost including overheads of less than £30k per year, which equates to an annual salary of not more than £15k

If the cost is **less than £100**, then we **cannot charge for responding to the request**. If the cost of the request exceeds £600, we can refuse the request. However, it is good practice to engage with the applicant to try to bring the cost of the request under £600 through, for example, narrowing the scope of the information asked for. If the cost is more than £100, but less than £600, we can charge the applicant 10% of the total of the cost. Therefore, the maximum cost is £50 per request (10% x (£600 - £100)).

If a charge is to be made, a fees notice must be issued within 20 working days setting out the projected cost. The applicant has three months to pay the notice and the 'clock stops' on the 20 working day timescale to respond to the request, until payment is made at which point, the clock resumes from where it "stopped". If the applicant is unhappy with the fees notice, a request for an internal review can be made and ultimately an appeal could be made to the Scottish Information Commissioner.

If the fees turn out to be underestimated, we cannot increase our fee. However, if it turns out to be less, it is good practice to provide the applicant with a refund.

Although the charge is small, we believe that putting a price on our responses will encourage requestors to value the responses they receive, thus cutting down on the amount of requests we receive.