



Providing Services and supports to People with an Intellectual Disability

POLICY ON FREEDOM OF INFORMATION **(under Freedom of Information Act 1997 and 2003)**

It is the policy of Ability West to comply with the obligations of the Freedom of Information Acts 1997 and 2003 and to ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities.

Introduction

The Freedom of Information Act 1997/2003 is intended to facilitate public access to information held by public bodies which is not routinely available by other means to the greatest extent possible consistent with the public interest and the right to privacy of individuals. The Act came into operation on 21 April 1998 and was adopted by voluntary bodies including Ability West on 21 October 1999 as per S.I No. 329 Freedom of Information Act, 1997 Regulations 1999. The Act applies to both living and deceased persons.

The Principles of the Freedom of Information Act

Under the Act, each person has a legal right to:

- Access records held by Ability West.
- Correction of personal information relating to oneself held by Ability West where it is inaccurate, incomplete or misleading.
- Access to reasons for decisions made by Ability West directly affecting oneself.

We shall perform our responsibilities under the Freedom of Information Acts by documenting a reference manual as required under Section 15/16 of the Act. In accordance with Section 15, the manual aims to facilitate access to official information held by Ability West such as its:

- Structure, organization, functions, powers and duties, services provided, and procedures for accessing these services
- classes of records held and details on facilitating the exercise the right of access to these records
- how, who and where to make a request in terms of the individuals legal right of access under the Freedom of Information Act 1997/2003 and

- Rights of review/appeal in respect of decisions made, and procedures in place to exercise those rights under the Freedom of Information Act 1997/2003.

In accordance with Section 16 of the manual, Ability West has outlined the organisation's own:

- Policies, procedures and practices
- Guidelines and interpretations
- Information regarding eligibility, referral, admission, discharge and
- Information on the complaints process

Responsibility

Overall responsibility for ensuring compliance with Freedom of Information Acts rests with Ability West. The Act obliges Ability West to provide assistance to persons in exercising their rights under the Act and to advise them of the right of appeal at each stage, this is co-ordinated by the Freedom of Information Officer.

To assist in this, all staff compiling reports should ensure that reports are factual and that only relevant and objective details are recorded and that the names of those attending meetings are recorded for future information. Records must be kept accurately, legibly, correctly filed and archived in accordance with good practice and record management/retention policy adopted by Ability West.

All decisions must be in accordance with policies/guidelines enforced in Ability West and notification of such decisions should include reference to the policy/guideline and be written in clear, precise language.

Right to Access Information

In order to facilitate members of the public accessing their personal information and information relating to Ability West and its services please note the following:

- (a) Not all requests for information should be dealt with as Freedom of Information requests i.e. Administrative access (make contact with your manager)
- (b) FOI application forms are available from the FOI Officer and the organisation's web-site

Procedures and Guidelines

Ability West is firmly committed to ensuring compliance with the Freedom of Information Acts, including the provision of staff guidelines and procedures in relation to all aspects of Freedom of Information Acts. This Freedom of Information Policy is supplemented (and may be amended) by specific policies and procedures adopted by Ability West and its subsidiaries.

Blackrock House, Salthill, Galway
Telephone: 091-540900 Fax: (091)528150
Email: enquiries@abilitywest.ie Website: abilitywest.ie

Review

This Freedom of Information Policy and procedures adopted will be reviewed regularly by Senior Management team in light of any legislative or other relevant developments.

Signed: *Breda Crehan-Roche*

Approval Date: 30/06/2014

Implementation Date: 30/06/2014

VERSION HISTORY:

Rev. 0	PREPARED BY: Theresa Caulfield, Assistant Director of Finance, FOI and Data Protection Officer	DATE: 31/08/2009
	APPROVED BY: Breda Crehan-Roche, Chief Executive	DATE: 30/11/2009
Rev. 1	REVIEWED BY: Theresa Hendley (formerly Caulfield), Assistant Director of Finance, FOI and Data Protection Officer	DATE: 04/06/2014
	APPROVED BY: Breda Crehan-Roche, Chief Executive	DATE: 30/06/2014
	NEXT REVIEW DUE:	DATE: 30/06/2016

REVISION HISTORY:

REVISION	DATE	DESCRIPTION OF CHANGE	CHANGE NO.
0	30/11/2009	Introduction of new policy	N/A
1	04/06/2014	See QARF No 234 for details of amendments	0234

Blackrock House, Salthill, Galway
Telephone: 091-540900 Fax: (091)528150
Email: enquiries@abilitywest.ie Website: abilitywest.ie