

# The UK Freedom of Information Act

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## Why FOI in the UK?

- Make government more transparent, accountable, and allow the public to understand and trust government more
- Information revolution
- ‘Secrecy scandals’
- Everyone else was doing it
- Policy for opposition

## Whitehall study: which objectives have been achieved?

Objective	Has the objective been met?
Transparency	✓
Accountability	✓
Better decision making process	✗
Public understanding of decision making	✗
Participation	✗
Trust	✗

## FOI conclusions

- **The media has a key influence on the impact of FOI**
- **FOI never settles down**
- **Both sides will play games**
- **Most requests are niche**
- **A few FOI requests cause most of the trouble** a few high profile cases cause disproportionate effort, media attention, public controversy and political pain.

## MPs and Peers use of FOI

- Small group of MPs use FOI, almost no peers
- FOI is used in different way than PQs
- FOI can and is used to do a variety of things from nuisance to policy
- Majority prefer established accountability mechanisms
- No 'special measures'? As likely to be speeded up as not but users are suspicious