

FOI DOF/2026-0496

Request

Dear FOI/EIR Team,

Freedom of Information Act 2000 request – NICS Dignity at Work User Guide

Please provide the following recorded information concerning the document titled “D253 User Guide for 6.04 Dignity at Work”, document reference FJS/ESH/000/REP/0005, version 5.06:

1. The document’s creation date, approval date, effective date and, if applicable, withdrawal or supersession date.
2. Its complete version and revision history, including the dates on which each version came into effect and was replaced.
3. A copy of every version of the Dignity at Work User Guide which was in force, used, available to staff, or treated by NICS HR as applicable at any time between 1 January 2023 and 31 December 2024.
4. Any approval record, sign-off record, change-control record, publication record, circular, instruction or other document showing that version 5.06 was authorised for operational use.
5. Any record explaining why version 5.06 is marked “FINAL DRAFT”, including whether it was nevertheless treated as the operative User Guide.
6. The version of the User Guide that NICS HR and HRConnect were required to apply to Dignity at Work complaints and referrals during August to November 2024.
7. Any guidance, instruction or procedure in force during August to November 2024 governing:
 - a. the referral or redirection of allegations from a formal grievance to the Dignity at Work process;
 - b. the preliminary assessment of whether a complaint disclosed a case for a formal Dignity at Work investigation;
 - c. notification of the preliminary decision to the complainant; and
 - d. the complainant’s right of appeal where a full investigation was refused

For context, the Department published version 5.06 as Annex C to FOI response DOF/2024-0493 on 24 January 2025. The document itself does not display an issue or effective date.

If any requested information is already publicly available, please provide the precise link and identify the relevant document and version. If any part of this request is considered too broad or likely to exceed the cost limit, please provide

advice and assistance so that I may refine it without losing the central request for the version applicable during August to November 2024.

DoF response

I can confirm the department holds some of the information requested.

1. The document was created and published in 2011; it was withdrawn on 11 January 2026 with the publication of the new Grievance policy and procedure.
2. As above.
3. As above. Version 5.06 was in force for the full duration of 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2024.
4. No records held.
5. No records held.
6. & 7. The internal procedure/process for formal grievances and dignity at work complaints are provided for in HR policies 6.04 Grievance and 6.09 Dignity at Work and within the associated user guides. These documents are exempt under Section 21(1) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 21 applies to information that is already reasonably accessible to the applicant by other means. Section 21 is an absolute exemption and the department is not required to consider whether the public interest favours disclosure of this information.

For ease of reference, you can find the links to the documents here:

[6.04 Grievance Policy](#)

[6.09 Dignity at Work](#)

[FOI DOF/2024-0493 Internal process/procedure for formal Grievance or Dignity at Work complaint; Section 75 proofing | Department of Finance](#)

ANNEX B - Internal Reviews

An Internal Review request examines the response based on applied exemptions, search adequacy, or response timeliness.

It is not the following, which will be treated as specified:

- Questions asking for clarification on information provided: Will be treated as part of the original FOI request.
- Additional questions about the information in the response: Will be treated as a new FOI request.
- Questions about the subject not related to the original request: Will be treated as new FOI request.
- Questions regarding how a service operates or why a decision was made: Will be treated as normal business and responded to accordingly.
- Complaints or concerns raised in response to information provided: Will be treated in line with relevant complaints procedure.

To make an Internal Review request:

- **Clearly state:** That you want an internal review of a previous FOI response and provide the necessary details.
- **Follow the timeline:** Be sure to submit your request within 40 working days of receiving the original response. If the Department has not responded at all, you have 40 working days after the original 20-day response period has passed.
- **Wait for a response:** The review is typically completed within 20 working days but can take up to 40 working days in exceptional circumstances. The Department should inform you of any delays.

What the review includes

- A fresh decision based on a reconsideration of all relevant factors.
- An assessment of whether the request was handled correctly and if exemptions were applied appropriately.
- The review will be conducted by someone who was not involved in the original decision.

If you wish to request an internal review, please email foi@finance-ni.gov.uk or write to FOI/EIR Team, Department of Finance, 2nd Floor, Craigantlet Buildings, Stoney Road, Belfast, BT4 3SX.