

# **DISTINCTION AND MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARDS COMMITTEE**

## **PUBLICATION SCHEME**

### **1. Introduction**

This Publication Scheme is a complete guide to the information routinely published by the Distinction and Meritorious Service Awards Committee (DMSAC). Its aim is to facilitate greater public access to information held by DMSAC.

### **2. About DMSAC**

The Distinction and Meritorious Service Awards Committee is a non-executive, non-departmental public body. Its purpose is to advise the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety on which medical and dental consultants in the Health and Personal Social Services should receive awards for outstanding professional work, having regard to the number of awards available for allocation.

### **3. Freedom of Information Act 2000**

- 3.1 The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (“the Act”) received Royal Assent on 30 November 2000. It gives a general right of access to all types of recorded information held by public authorities, sets out exemptions from that right and places a number of obligations on public authorities. A “public authority” is defined in the Act, and includes but is not restricted to central and local government, non-departmental public bodies, the police, the health service and schools, colleges and universities. The general right of access to the information held by a public authority is provided for under section 1 of the Act. Any person wishing to exercise this right, which will not come into force until 1 January 2005, will have to make a written request to the public authority. Any person who makes such a request must be informed whether the public authority holds that information and, subject to exemptions, supplied with that information.
- 3.2 Under the Act every public authority is required to adopt and maintain a publication scheme. A publication scheme is a guide detailing types of information which are to be made routinely available.
- 3.3 The publication scheme must set out the classes of information contained within the scheme, the manner in which the information is intended to be

published, and whether or not a charge will be made for the information. The purpose of a scheme is to ensure a significant amount of information is easily and routinely available. Schemes are intended to encourage organisations to publish more information proactively and to develop a greater culture of openness.

#### **4. DMSAC's Publication Scheme**

DMSAC's approach in publishing this publication scheme is to be as open as possible and to cover all aspects of DMSAC's work. The aim is to publish as much information as possible, taking into account possible exemptions. The effectiveness of the scheme will be reviewed at regular intervals.

#### **5. How much do the publications cost?**

The publications are all free unless otherwise stated. We reserve the right to make a charge to cover the administrative costs of providing a large number of documents.

#### **6. How is the information made available?**

The information can be accessed directly from our website: [www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/hss/dmsac/dmsac.html](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/hss/dmsac/dmsac.html) It is also available in hard copy or by e mail. If you wish to request information by hard copy or by e mail you should write to the DMSAC Secretary at the address in paragraph 7 below. You should give your full name and address (including postal code), details of the information you are requesting, and the way in which you would prefer the information to be sent (by hard copy or e mail).

#### **7. Responsibility for this Publication Scheme**

The DMSAC Secretary, Mr John Nesbitt, has responsibility for the scheme on behalf of DMSAC. His contact details are:

The DMSAC Secretary  
Room D1.3  
Castle Buildings  
Upper Newtownards Road  
Belfast BT4 3SJ  
Telephone number 028 905 22817  
Fax No 028 905 22912  
E-mail: [john.nesbitt@dhsspsni.gov.uk](mailto:john.nesbitt@dhsspsni.gov.uk)

## 8. Classes of Information

8.1 The information to be published in the publication scheme has been grouped into five classes. Classes of information have been set out to help you find the information you are looking for. Some classes may contain information which may be subject to exemptions under the Act, and examples of these have been identified. The five classes are:

- Class One – Organisational Structure
- Class Two – Meetings
- Class Three – Procedures and Guidance
- Class Four – Regular Publications
- Class Five – Financial Information

### 8.2 **Class One: Organisational Structure**

This includes information about the purpose of the scheme, and information which gives details of the DMSAC secretariat, and details of the DMSAC membership. The information is available on the DMSAC website or by post or e mail.

### 8.3 **Class Two: Meetings**

This includes information relating to Committee meetings, for example, the DMSAC timetable and minutes of meetings. Meeting papers containing personal data, including application forms and citation forms, will not be made available to the public.

- The current timetable gives closing dates for each of the stages of an awards round, and gives dates of Committee meetings. The information is available on the DMSAC website or by post or e mail.
- Minutes of meetings, except in cases where personal data is involved.

### 8.4 **Class Three: Procedures and Guidance**

This includes information on processing applications to DMSAC and guidance on the criteria for making awards. This information is currently contained in sections 7 and 8 of the “Guide to the Scheme”, which is available on the DMSAC website, by post or e mail.

### 8.5 **Class Four: Regular Publications**

This includes the DMSAC “Guide to the Scheme”, annual reports, lists of the names of successful consultants, and press releases.

- The “Guide to the Scheme” provides comprehensive guidance on how the scheme operates in Northern Ireland. The Guide is available on the DMSAC website, by post or e mail.
- DMSAC’s Annual Report provides an account of the awards round, an analysis of the outcome, and lists the names of all award holders in Northern Ireland. The annual reports are available on the DMSAC website, and by e mail. The current annual report is also available by post.
- The lists of the names of successful consultants in an awards round will be published on the DMSAC website at the end of the awards round, after it is approved by the Department and the relevant consultants notified. It will also be available by post or e mail.
- Press Releases are available on the Department’s website ([www.dhsspsni.gov.uk](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk)).

## 8.6 **Class Five: Financial Information**

This includes information on the total expenditure on awards in a year and the value of each type of award. The information is contained in section 2 of the current “Guide to the Scheme” which is available on the DMSAC website, or by post or e mail.

## 9. **Feedback and Complaints**

- 9.1 Feedback and comments on this publication scheme are welcomed and should be addressed to:

The DMSAC Secretary  
 Room D1.3  
 Castle Buildings  
 Upper Newtownards Road  
 Belfast BT4 3SJ

E-mail: [john.nesbitt@dhsspsni.gov.uk](mailto:john.nesbitt@dhsspsni.gov.uk)

- 9.2 If you have a complaint about this publication scheme you should write or send an e mail, in the first instance, to the DMSAC Chairman at the above address. The DMSAC Chairman will investigate your complaint and provide you with a reply, normally within 20 working days of the receipt of the complaint.

- 9.3 If you are not satisfied with the reply from the DMSAC Chairman you should then contact the Departmental Information Manager. The Departmental Information Manager will investigate your complaint further and provide you with a reply, normally within 20 working days of the receipt of your complaint to the Departmental Information Manager. The Departmental Information Manager's address is:

The Departmental Information Manager  
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety  
Annex 4, Castle Buildings  
Stormont  
Upper Newtownards Road  
Belfast BT4 3SJ

- 9.4 If the matter is not resolved to your satisfaction after the reply from the Departmental Information Manager, you may refer your complaint on to the Information Commissioner who is independent of the Department. The Information Commissioner's address is:

Information Commissioner  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire SK9 5AF

- 9.5 More information about the Freedom of Information Act can be obtained from the Information Commissioner's website address at:

[www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk)