



WhatDoTheyKnow - press briefing

A [mySociety](#) project

www.WhatDoTheyKnow.com

Contact: press@mysociety.org

Overview

[WhatDoTheyKnow](#) makes it simple to submit Freedom of Information requests to public authorities.

As a member of the press, you may use it to:

- investigate stories
- browse requests which have been made by members of the public
- make a Freedom of Information request

WhatDoTheyKnow is an unusually rich source for journalists. By its nature, it often enables individuals to uncover previously hidden facts.

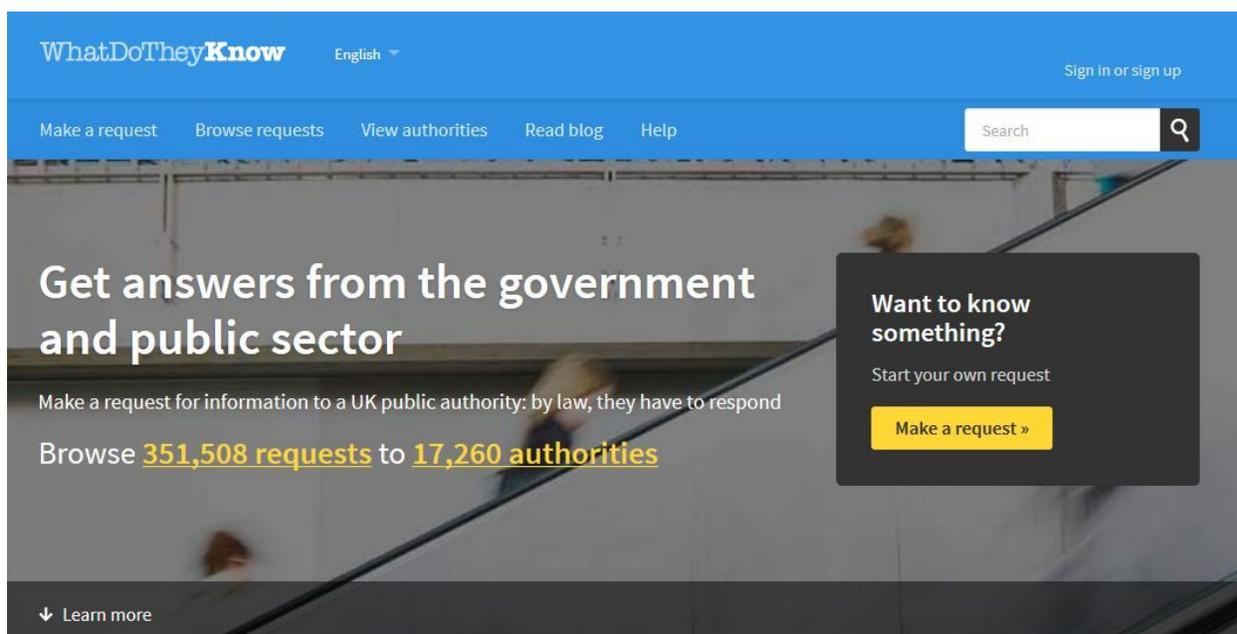
Coming soon

Alaveteli for Professionals is our tool for journalists and activists, currently (as of August 2016) in development. [Read more here](#) and do [get in touch](#) if you would like to be involved with early testing or feature suggestions.

History

WhatDoTheyKnow was built by the not-for-profit organisation [mySociety](#). It's a site where people can submit and read Freedom of Information requests in the UK. It launched in 2008.

In 2006, mySociety put out a call for project ideas: the winning idea was for a website that would open up access to Freedom of Information for UK citizens.



This would address that fact that while the 2000 FOI Act gave citizens rights to information, few knew about them, or understood how to access them.

WhatDoTheyKnow guides users - even the least expert - to submit a FOI request quickly and easily.

This is then sent to the relevant public body, while a copy is published on the website at the same time for anyone to read. All subsequent correspondence is also published, creating a browsable archive of information dating back to the site's launch.

Like all mySociety sites, the code is open source and may be used or adapted for free.

International usage

In 2011, mySociety launched the [Alaveteli platform](#), which allows anyone to set up a Right to Know/Freedom of Information website in his or her own country, no matter how (or whether) their legal system works in this area of jurisdiction.

Alaveteli sites are now running in more than 25 jurisdictions across the world.

Facts and figures

Launched: 2008

URL: www.WhatDoTheyKnow.com

Requests: Over 350,000 (as of August 2016)

Visitors: Approx 550,000 per month (Aug 2016)

Credits: <https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/help/credits>

Attribution and formatting conventions

- Please include a link to WhatDoTheyKnow and/or mySociety in any article based on information uncovered via the site.
- You may take screenshots of the site for press use, but please take steps to remove users' names and personal details if you do not have their explicit permission to publish them.
- WhatDoTheyKnow is written as one word, but note the capitalisations.
- WhatDoTheyKnow's logo can be found on [mySociety's press page](#).

Press use of WhatDoTheyKnow

Investigate

You can use WhatDoTheyKnow to ask questions to [any public body in the UK](#). Under the Freedom of Information law, [they have to respond](#).

All requests sent through WhatDoTheyKnow are also published on the site; if you would like to keep your investigation private, you should [contact the relevant authority directly](#).

For lots more information about how WhatDoTheyKnow works, read our concise [Help pages](#).

Research

To find requests on a specific subject, use the search box on the homepage.

Find recent requests

Read the very latest facts to be uncovered. Recent successful requests (ie, those which have been answered) can be found on [this page](#).

Find local stories

Search for the name of a town, city or region from the [homepage](#).

- Select *authorities* to see public bodies containing that name in their title (eg a search for 'Leeds' brings up 'Leeds City Council', 'Leeds Metropolitan University', etc)

- Select *requests* to see all previous FOI requests containing that name in the the request or response.

Find requests to a specific body

Search for any authority from the home page, or browse a complete list of authorities on [this page](#).

Notable requests

See [this blog post](#) for a list of our team's favourite or most notable requests in the site's history.

Subscribe

You can subscribe to any request, authority, keyword or user by email or RSS via the icons at the top right of the request page.

Statistics

We do not currently publish league tables or statistics to show, for example, which authorities respond most quickly to FOI requests, or which answer the most.

However, you can find some of this information on [this blog post](#) (the author is unaffiliated to mySociety).

Caveats

Before drawing assumptions from data you find on WhatDoTheyKnow, please consider:

- WhatDoTheyKnow is not the only channel through which FOI requests can be made, so it cannot be used to judge a body's overall responsiveness.
- Some authorities are more likely to receive vexatious requests, which they are legally permitted to refuse – and this can skew their apparent responsiveness.

Read more

[FAQs about WhatDoTheyKnow](#)

[More about WhatDoTheyKnow](#) on the mySociety website

[All mySociety's Freedom of Information work](#)

Contact

Make contact with a user

If you would like to interview one of our users, please contact team@whatdotheyknow.com who will pass on your details to the user in question. Note that the team is comprised mainly of volunteers, so you may not receive an immediate reply.

In return, we require a press mention, link or credit for WhatDoTheyKnow.

Make contact with the team

We are happy to participate in interviews, or answer questions about the website and its place in society. We cannot give opinions about individual FOI requests, the responsiveness of specific authorities, or anything that will compromise our position of neutrality.

In the first instance, please contact press@mysociety.org.