

# Do you know your SARs from your FOIs?

Subject Access Requests (SARs) and Freedom of Information requests (FOIs) have areas of overlap and put a lot of strain on your teams. Under the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 businesses will be required to demonstrate a consistent approach to handling these requests.

Getting them mixed up could be costly for your organisation.

## SARs

Subject Access Requests give individuals the right to access their own personal data under data protection legislation such as GDPR.

Rising volumes with detailed information requirements

Increasing number of follow up requests

Private, individual interactions

Legally sensitive information – accurate redaction required

Must be responded to within a month

Missed deadlines or errors in responses can lead to compliance failures and data protection risks

Overall figures aren't available for SARs, but in one enforcement case, deadlines were missed by up to 2 years on 71% of requests

## FOIs

The Freedom of Information Act gives individuals the right to ask to see recorded information from public authorities like councils, the NHS and the police.

Typically high-volume

UK government bodies got 83,041 FOI requests in 2024

High visibility – scrutinised by journalists and the public

Assessment of exemptions – public interest tests required

Must be responded to within 20 working days

Missed deadlines or errors in responses can increase operational strain and damage reputation

In 2024, UK government bodies missed the statutory deadline on nearly a quarter (24%) of FOI requests

Numbers of requests

Visibility

Risk factors

Timeframes

Organisational impact

Response rates

## We've seen how they differ... now for the similarities

### Financial penalties

Mismanaging SARs or FOIs will hit your bottom line

£2.7m

ICO data protection fines in 2024

£14m

In ICO penalties against a major organisation for data security failings in 2025

### Pressure on internal teams

Systems aren't fit for purpose, meaning more stress for employees

59%

of information governance professionals rely on email, spreadsheets and shared drives to manage requests

34%

aren't confident they could find all relevant records within statutory timeframes

### An increasing problem

Volumes of requests are rising – and expected to continue on an upward trend

18%

Increase in FOI requests from 2023 to 2024

## A better way to manage both SARs and FOIs: FileSmart

Manage all your sensitive and urgent data requests within one secure system:

Enables consistency checks



Aids workflows



Integration with your existing data storage systems



Integrated redaction tools to reduce human error



One system showing open requests, deadlines and tasks



Role-based permissions and timestamped evidence for audits



## For support in how to build and manage your SAR and FOI request process visit:

[www.oasisgroup.com/start-a-conversation](http://www.oasisgroup.com/start-a-conversation)