

Dear [REDACTED]

FOI Reply 445

Thank you for your email sent to the Scotland Office on 18 July 2012.

You asked for the following information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000:

I am writing to obtain information about the total amount of money paid to trade unions by Scotland Office, the amount of staff time spent on trade union duties and / or activities and the payment of subscriptions.

To outline my query as clearly as possible, I am requesting:

1. The total amount of money paid to all trade unions for financial years a) 2010-11 and b) 2011-12. Where possible please provide a list of total payments made to each different trade union. However if this disaggregated information is not available please continue to provide a total figure for trade union payments. In response to this question, please only include direct payments to the unions from your organisation, not membership dues deducted from staff salaries.
2. Please state:
 - a. Which trade unions your organisation provide staff time to work on trade union duties and / or activities (sometimes called 'Trade Union facility time') in i) 2010-11 and ii) 2011-12.
 - b. The number of full time equivalent staff that were provided for each trade union in i) 2010-11 and ii) 2011-12.
3. Does your organisation automatically deduct trade union subscriptions from staff salaries in the payroll process in order to pass them on to the union? If so, how much did your organisation charge each union for this service in a) 2010-11 and b) 2011-12?

Please note that the guidelines issued by ACAS state that: *"An employee who is a member of an independent trade union recognised by the employer in respect of that description of employee is to be permitted reasonable time off during working hours to take part in any trade union activity. An employee who is a member of an independent and recognised trade union is also permitted to take reasonable time off during working hours for the purposes of accessing the services of a Union Learning Representative (provided those services are services for which the Union Learning Representative is entitled to time off)."*

If the information is not recorded, there is no way of ascertaining whether the time off provided is reasonable. I therefore do not expect the response that the organisation does not hold this information. If a formal record is not kept then I will accept a reasonable estimate.

Please also note that all of the questions are separate requests for information; question one refers to any direct payments to trade unions whereas question two relates to any staff time spent on trade union duties / activities and finally question three relates to the deduction of member dues by the organisation on the trade unions' behalf. If the response to any of the questions is 'nil' then please continue to respond to the other questions.

The Scotland Office has completed its search for information. In answer to your request:

1. The Scotland Office did not pay any money to any trade unions in a) 2010-11 and b) 2011-12.
2. The Scotland Office did not have any staff undertaking trade union duties or activities through facility time arrangements in a) 2010-11 and b) 2011-12.
3. The Scotland Office does not employ staff directly . All staff join on a secondment type basis or loan from other government bodies, principally the Scottish Government and the Ministry of Justice which remain the employers. As such, it is these employers which would manage the deduction of any trade union subscription payments

I hope you find this helpful.

If you are dissatisfied with the decision made in relation to your request you may ask for an internal review. A request for an internal review should be addressed to:


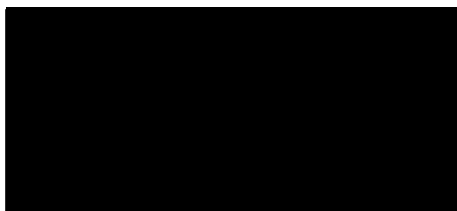
FOI Officer
1 Melville Crescent
EDINBURGH
EH3 7HW

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The contact details are:


Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
CHESHIRE
SK9 5AF

If you have any queries about this letter please contact me.

Yours sincerely



Scotland Office



1 Melville Crescent
Edinburgh
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