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FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST: FOI 1146-16

Thank you for your email of 8 December 2016 as attached, asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000 in relation to international child abduction.

Outcome of Search

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) holds some information relevant to your request, which also relates to your previous request reference FOIA 0115-15 (as attached).

Disclosure

Q1 International Child Abduction

The FCO has figures for the number of international child custody abduction cases reported to our posts overseas. It does not necessarily reflect the actual figures as families do not always report alleged cases to us.

The table below details the number of international child custody and/or abduction cases reported to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) between 2013 and 2016 (as at 30 November 2016). Please note that the figures are subject to change depending on when the cases are reported to us.



Therefore, the figures we previously advised in response to FOI 0115-15 are not the same as those reflected in the table below.

Child Custody/Abduction	All Posts
2013	615
2014	492
2015	464
2016 (as at 30 Nov)	405

We have extracted this data from the FCO's global Consular assistance database. The statistics include recorded cases where the main or secondary reason we provided consular assistance was in relation to child custody/abduction.

Additional Source of Information

It is possible to obtain our statistics on the GOV.UK website – the link for this is as follows: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/consular-data> . The information is available by month, for each of our diplomatic missions overseas.

Questions 2/3 Method of Abduction and Repatriation

I regret that the cost limit still applies in relation to questions 2 and 3 for the reasons set out below.

Additional Question - A Prohibited Steps Order

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office does not hold this information. You may wish to contact the UK Border Force; their link is below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/border-force>



Cost Limit FOIA Section 12

The FCO does not record information in such a way as to facilitate access to the information requested in Q2/3. We would have to manually review and assess approximately 1,900 case files, which we estimate would take 38 working days.

Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit. The Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004 has specified the cost limit, which for central government is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one or more persons spending 3 ½ working days in determining whether the department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting it. Your request as presently formulated remains widely framed and we estimate that it will take more than 3 ½ working days to locate, retrieve and extract this information. In these circumstances, we are not obliged under FOIA to comply with your request.

Yours sincerely,

Desk officer
FOI/DPA Team (Consular)

Consular FOI-DPA Team
Consular Directorate

