



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Human Resources Directorate
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
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11 May 2018

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0404-18

Thank you for your email of 11 April 2018 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

Could the Department please detail the total number of staff it had in May 2016 and how many staff it currently has? Could the Department breakdown how many of these staff were hired as a result of Brexit?

Could the department please provide its total expenditure on independent education for the families of department employees abroad in 2017?

Could the department please provide its total expenditure on independent education for the families of department employees who have been hired since Brexit, to work on Brexit or any Brexit related issues?

Could the department please detail exactly how much has been spent on headhunter/recruitment agencies since 2016?

On 23 April, you later clarified that “independent education for the families of department employees abroad in 2017” related specifically to Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA) costs for staff based overseas with children at UK boarding schools.

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed the search for the information which you requested.

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request.

(1) Could the Department please detail the total number of staff it had in May 2016 and how many staff it currently has?

As of 31 May 2016, the FCO had 4,302 UK-based members of staff. As of 31 March 2018, the FCO had 4,591 UK-based members of staff.

(2) Could the Department breakdown how many of these staff were hired as a result of Brexit?

Since the referendum the FCO has taken steps to strengthen our diplomatic network across Europe to support a successful EU Exit and to strengthen bilateral relationships with our European partners. Staff across the FCO work on different aspects of EU Exit, including on our wider work to strengthen our bilateral relationships as we prepare for life outside the EU. It is therefore not possible to quantify exactly how many FCO staff work on EU Exit and how many new staff were hired to work on EU Exit. However, we have created more than 250 new positions in London and overseas to support work towards a successful EU Exit. Most of these new positions are filled by internal moves.

(3) Could the department please provide its total expenditure on independent education for the families of department employees abroad in 2017?

The FCO has spent £6,265,822 on Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA) for officers posted overseas in FY 2017/2018.

It is a condition of their employment that members of the diplomatic service must be prepared to serve anywhere in the world at any time during their career, sometimes at very short notice. Those with children have a legal obligation as parents to ensure that their children receive a full-time education from the age of five years. Most parents prefer to take their children with them abroad, but in some of the 168 countries and territories where the FCO has UK based staff, we do not permit staff to take their children either for health or security reasons. In others, local schools of an acceptable standard are not available.

It is longstanding practice that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) helps staff meet their potentially conflicting obligations by providing financial support for their children's education in the UK where staff choose this, or are obliged to do so given local conditions in the country to which they are posted, particularly at secondary level. This support encompasses a period before and after the posting and the period of the posting itself.

The FCO refunds standard term fees up to a ceiling which is reviewed annually. Where staff opt to send their children to more expensive schools, staff meet the difference in cost. The maximum amount the FCO will pay is determined by an independent survey conducted by Employment Conditions Abroad (ECA) International, which is used by public and private sector employers whose staff work across the world. Various factors, including availability of places (sometimes at short notice) and proximity of other family members, influence which schools staff choose for their children.

(4) Could the department please provide its total expenditure on independent education for the families of department employees who have been hired since Brexit, to work on Brexit or any Brexit related issues?

As outlined in answer to question 2, it is not possible to quantify how many employees have been hired since Brexit to work on EU Exit so we are unable to provide this education expenditure.

(5) Could the department please detail exactly how much has been spent on head-hunter/recruitment agencies since 2016?

The FCO has spent £358,254 on agency fees to run external recruitment campaigns during financial years 2016-17 and 2017-18.

Yours sincerely,

Human Resources Directorate



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