



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

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**Your ref:**  
**Our ref:** RFI 6371  
**Date:** 26 March 2014

Dear,

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: SEXUAL HARASSMENT ALLEGATIONS**

Thank you for your request for information about Sexual Harassment Allegations, which we received on 5 March 2014. As you know, we have handled your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

You asked:

*"I have the following request under the Freedom of Information Act:  
Please can you state how many allegations of sexual harassment the department has received in 2013, 2012, 2011 and 2010.  
Additionally for each allegation I would like a break down of the genders of both the complainant and the focus of the complaint.  
What are the department's reporting procedures for the alleged victims sexual harassment?"*

The information you requested is as follows:

Defra has received one allegation of sexual harassment in the period from 2010, 2011, 2012 to 2013.

- The complainant was female and the respondent was male.
- The focus of the complaint was an allegation of inappropriate use of language and personal comments relating to the complainant's appearance.

Defra and its Executive Agencies have implemented the Civil Service Employee Policy grievance procedure which must be followed where there is a complaint relating to the treatment of an employee, including complaints of bullying, harassment and discrimination.

- The procedure's emphasis is on the use of an informal approach to resolve complaints wherever possible.
- Formal complaints must be raised without unreasonable delay and within three months of the issue or incident which forms the basis of the complaint.
- All complaints should be dealt with promptly, transparently, fairly and consistently.



- Everyone involved in the grievance process is expected to try to resolve the issue informally before raising a formal grievance, show respect for others, work together to resolve the complaint and maintain confidentiality.
- The policy is based on fair and transparent treatment of all Civil Service employees, and complies with: employment legislation; Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) best practice; the Equality Act 2010; and the Civil Service Management Code.
- Support is also available from the Department's network of Harassment and Bullying Support Advisers, the mediation service, Defra's Equality and Diversity Staff Networks, the Trade Unions and the Employee Assistance Programme.

Note:

- "the department" has been interpreted as meaning Defra and its Executive Agencies i.e. the "core" Defra department, the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA), the Rural Payments Agency (RPA), the Food and Environment Research Agency (FERA), the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) and the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD). Defra's Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) and Arms Length Bodies (ALBs) have not been included.
- "allegation" has been interpreted as meaning a formal complaint of sexual harassment and not an informal allegation. Defra does not maintain a central record of informal allegations of sexual harassment. However, records of formal complaints of sexual harassment raised under either a legacy bullying and harassment policy or the current CSEP grievance policy are maintained

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the FOIA, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless exempt. Therefore, the information released to you may now be published on our website together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context.

I attach Annex A, which explains the copyright that applies to the information being released to you.

I also attach Annex B giving contact details should you be unhappy with the service you have received.

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

Yours sincerely,

Ann Tarran

**Direct Line** 020 7979 8583

**Email** [ann.tarran@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ann.tarran@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

## **Annex A**

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## **Annex B**

### **Complaints**

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request you may make a complaint or appeal against our decision under section 17(7) of the FOIA or under regulation 18 of the EIRs, as applicable, within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to Mike Kaye, Head of Information Standards, Area 4D, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR (email: [requestforinfo@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:requestforinfo@defra.gsi.gov.uk)) and he will arrange for an internal review of your case. Details of Defra's complaints procedure are on our [website](#).

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, section 50 of the FOIA and regulation 18 of the EIRs gives you the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Please note that generally the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted Defra's own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

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