



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Legal Directorate
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
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08 July 2014

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 - REQUEST REF: 0591-14

Thank you for your email of 10 June asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

"I would like to know the amount of money the department spent on the services of external law firms and barristers over the last five years (years ending March 31). If this is not possible within the restrictions of the Freedom of Information Act, three years of data will suffice. If this is not possible, two years of data are acceptable."

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

The majority of spend by the FCO on services of external law firms and barristers within the UK is channelled through Legal Directorate. The amount varies from year to year primarily because of the number of Court cases in which the FCO is involved at any time, is variable. The amount spent by Legal Directorate on external law firms and barristers (excluding VAT) over the fiscal period that you have requested is as follows:

FY 2013 – 2014:	£1,679,113.81
FY 2012 – 2013:	£945,142.72
FY 2011 – 2012:	£840,956.70
FY 2010 – 2011:	£605,002.44
FY 2009 – 2010:	£503,401.05

It would not be possible to calculate the amount the FCO as a whole (i.e. overseas and other FCO departments in the UK) spent on external law firms and barristers over the fiscal period you have mentioned. There is no central record and calculating this figure would exceed the cost threshold as set out in Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 12 of the Act makes provisions for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost

of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit. The limit has been specified in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004. For central government the appropriate limit is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one or more persons spending 3 ½ days working days in determining whether the Department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting it. Your request as presently formulated is widely-framed and I 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 the Act to comply with your request.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the Freedom of Information Act, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless it is exempt. The information we have supplied to you may now be published on our website together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context.

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Yours sincerely,

Legal Directorate



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