



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Human Resources Directorate
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
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02 March 2016

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0164-16

Thank you for your email of 9 February 2016 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

In reference to the employment of civil servants in your department, please provide:

1. All documents referring to currently active policy concerning any form of support given to employees to undertake volunteering opportunities outside of their day to day responsibilities. If these documents are not applicable to all civil servants, please indicate to which group(s) of civil servants each document applies.

2. A breakdown of what support and benefits** are currently given to employees to undertake volunteering opportunities outside of their day to day responsibilities. If these are not applicable to all civil servants, please indicate to which group(s) of civil servants each type of support and benefits applies.*

**Support could be, for example, paid time off to volunteer, flexible work arrangements to volunteer, group volunteering facilitation, individual volunteer matching with community organisations, pool of volunteers for community organisations to draw from, skilled volunteer facilitation, professional development through a community service learning approach, international volunteering facilitation, information about volunteer opportunities in the community (through an Internet website, an Intranet website, information sessions, volunteer fairs, e-newsletter, volunteer-related messages to interested employees, etc.), volunteer recognition awards, articles showcasing employees' volunteering stories, etc.*

***Benefits could be, for example, in reference to salary, remuneration, annual leave, promotion or other forms of benefit connected to employment.*

3. The name, as well as the work telephone number, e-mail address and physical address, of the civil servant(s) coordinating your department's employer-supported volunteer scheme.

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.

In response to your questions:

1. *All documents referring to currently active policy concerning any form of support given to employees to undertake volunteering opportunities outside of their day to day responsibilities. If these documents are not applicable to all civil servants, please indicate to which group(s) of civil servants each document applies.*

I enclose the relevant policy document on Special Leave with Pay in the context of volunteering.

Some of the withheld information is personal data relating to members of staff. It is our view that disclosure of this information would breach the first data protection principle, which states that personal data should be processed fairly and lawfully. Section 40(2) and (3) of the Freedom of Information Act therefore apply. It is the fairness aspect of this principle which we think would be breached by disclosure in this case. In such circumstances section 40 confers an absolute exemption on disclosure. We do not therefore have to apply the public interest test. The other redacted sections contain information which is not relevant as it is not covered by the scope of the FOI request.

2. *A breakdown of what support* and benefits** are currently given to employees to undertake volunteering opportunities outside of their day to day responsibilities. If these are not applicable to all civil servants, please indicate to which group(s) of civil servants each type of support and benefits applies.*

Details of support available to staff is included in the attached policy document. Staff may also request to work flexibly in order to undertake volunteering opportunities. The FCO supports flexible working and extends the right to request flexible working to all its employees. This applies to all Civil Servants in the FCO.

3. *The name, as well as the work telephone number, e-mail address and physical address, of the civil servant(s) coordinating your department's employer-supported volunteer scheme.*

There is no central co-ordination or authorisation of special leave with pay to undertake volunteering opportunities.

Once an FOI request is answered, it is considered to be in the public domain. To promote transparency, we may now publish the response and any material released on gov.uk in the [FOI releases](#) section. All personal information in the letter will be removed before publishing.

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Yours sincerely,

Pay & Reward Policy Officer
Human Resources Directorate



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