



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

**FCO Services**  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
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29 March 2016

## **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0248-16**

Thank you for your email of 28 February 2016 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

*I am writing under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request details of breaches of the Data Protection Act within in your organisation; specifically I am asking for:*

- 1a. *Approximately how many members of staff do you have?*
- 1b. *Approximately how many contractors have routine access to your information?*
  
- 2a. *Do you have an information security incident/event reporting policy/guidance/management document(s) that includes categorisation/classification of such incidents?*
- 2b. *Can you provide me with a copy of the latest version of these document(s)? (This can be an email attachment or a link to the document on your publicly facing web site)*
  
- 3a. *Do you know how many data protection incidents your organisation has had since April 2011? (Incidents reported to the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) as a Data Protection Act (DPA) breach)*  
Answer: Yes, No, Only since (date):
- 3b. *How many breaches occurred for each Financial Year the figures are available for?*  
Answer FY11-12: FY12-13: FY13-14: FY14-15:
  
- 4a. *Do you know how many other information security incidents your organisation has had since April 2011? (A breach resulting in the loss of organisational information other than an incident reported to the ICO, eg compromise of sensitive contracts or encryption by malware. )*  
Answer: Yes, No, Only since (date):
- 4b. *How many incidents occurred for each Financial Year the figures are available for?*  
Answer FY11-12: FY12-13: FY13-14: FY14-15:
  
- 5a. *Do you know how many information security events/anomaly your organisation has had since April 2011? (Events where information loss did not occur but resources were assigned to investigate or recover, eg nuisance malware or locating misfiled documents.)*

Answer: Yes, No, Only since (date):

5b. How many events occurred for each Financial Year the figures are available for?

Answer FY11-12: FY12-13: FY13-14: FY14-15:

6a. Do you know how many information security near misses your organisation has had since April 2011? (Problems reported to the information security teams that indicate a possible technical, administrative or procedural issue.)

Answer: Yes, No, Only since (date):

6b. How many near-misses occurred for each Financial Year the figures are available for?

Answer FY11-12: FY12-13: FY13-14: FY14-15:

*If the specific answers to 4, 5 and 6 are not readily available, I am content for these questions to be modified/replaced with similar questions that are derived from your organisations categorisation/classification system within the documents requested in question 2. I would need to first make an FoI request for question 2 in order to frame suitable questions 4, 5 and 6, then make a second request. Similarly calendar year can replace financial year. Please state in the reply if this option has been implemented. My preferred format to receive this information is electronically, but if that is not possible I will be willing to accept hard copy*

Also

*As a general enquiry*

*Would someone from the information security structure (CISO or information security manager) consider being approached to partake in academic research in to security incident and event reporting? This academic research would ensure respect any wish for anonymity and anonymising of data supplied. The format of any proposed research would be less than a dozen questions, provided in advance, and followed by an interview. If after considering the questions your organisation is content, we will arrange the interview that is not intended to exceed 30 minutes. This is likely to be early summer 2016.*

*If someone is willing to participate in this research, would you provide me with a name and contact email by email outside of the FoI request.*

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed the search for the information which you requested. I can confirm that FCO Services does hold some information relevant to your request.

A dedicated team provide overall governance and assurance; sets standards, policy and procedures; embeds awareness; and ensures that health checks are completed to enable the business to continue successfully in the face of ongoing cyber and wider security threats.

The answers to the questions raised in your reference No. 804148 are below. I have used the same number format.

### **1a, 1b**

This information is not included in this response as it falls under Section 21 of the FOIA in that the information is already reasonably accessible.

The information requested is included in our annual accounts which can be found via this link [FCO Services Annual Reports](#)

Further information on the exemptions used can be found in more detail later in this document.

## **2a, 2b**

FCO Services do have Information Security incident/event reporting policy, guidance and Management Information requirements. The release of this information is withheld under Section 31 of the Freedom of Information Act

An explanation of the reasons for the application of this exemption is detailed later in this document. We have assessed that maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure. The document contains references to controls, processes and other information of a sensitive nature which may jeopardise security.

I can however confirm that the content of the document includes:

- Reporting structure
- Definitions
- Action required in the event of an incident
- Action to be taken within the first hour of all incidents
- Actions to be taken when the breach is considered to be a Severe/High Impact Incident
- Actions to be taken within the first 24 hours of a Severe/High Impact Incident
- Actions to be taken for a Non-Severe/Low Impact Incident
- Actions to be taken a week after all incidents
- Communications Guidance

## **3a, 3b**

FCO Services holds records since FY 13-14 and has 1 data protection incident recorded. The incident was reported to the Information Commissioners' Office. The breakdown year on year is as follows

FY13-14: 0

FY14-15: 1

We are unable to provide the information you have requested under your questions 4a, 4b, 5a, 5b, 6a and 6b because the software application used by the help desk does not have the capability to make a distinction between the types of call received at initial contact.

Incidents are reported to the internal FCO Services help desk as part of routine call logging and investigation. Details of individual incidents are recorded by the operator as they are reported. There are no standard categories of incident available to the operator to 'pick' so the nature of the incident is recorded as it is articulated by the officer phoning in. The time needed to review individual records to identify any relevant incidents would exceed the appropriate cost limit under section 12 of the FOIA.

Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act makes provision 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 working days in determining whether the Department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting it. You may wish to refine your request to narrow its scope to bring it within the appropriate limit.

You could request the number of incidents recorded as a 'breach'. However, because of how the details of an incident are recorded, we cannot say that this would capture all, or any, incidents relevant to your request. We would then consider whether we can provide the information requested within the appropriate cost limit. This would of course be subject to the consideration of whether any of the other exemptions under the FOI Act apply.

The general enquiry made falls outside of the FOI request and will be handled separately.

## **Exemptions**

### **Section 21**

Under the FOI Act, FCO Services is not obliged to provide information to a requester if the information you seek is already reasonably available or accessible to you.

Section 21 provides an absolute exemption. This means that if the requested information is held by the public authority, and it is reasonably accessible to the applicant by other means, it is not subject to the public interest test.

### **Section 31**

The exemption in section 31 (1) (a) is designed to cover all aspects of the prevention and detection of crime.

Section 31 is a qualified exemption, which means that it is subject to a public interest test. We acknowledge the public interest in openness and transparency and we recognise that releasing this information would provide the public with assurance that we are protecting our information which includes the protection of all personal and sensitive personal data held. However, disclosure of the information requested could aid criminals who may be intent on interception or a targeted attack.

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](http://gov.uk) in the [FOI releases](#) section. All personal information in the letter will be removed before publishing.

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Yours sincerely,

Corporate Knowledge and Security

FCO Services



We keep and use information in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. We may release this personal information to other UK government departments and public authorities.