



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Human Resources Department
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
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03 May 2016

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: FOI 0389-16

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

Do you offer any sort of childcare voucher to staff?

If yes, who do you contract with to provide this service, when is the contract next due for renewal, and what is the value of the contract?

What is the maximum amount a member of staff can receive each month (assuming they joined the scheme before 6 April 2011)?

Is the amount the staff member receives deducted from salary or paid in addition to it?

What policy, if any, do you have on the deduction of childcare vouchers from statutory maternity pay?

I am writing to advise you that following a search of our paper and electronic records, I have established that the information you requested is as follows:

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office does offer childcare vouchers to staff under a salary sacrifice arrangement. The childcare voucher scheme is provided by EdenRed.

The maximum amount a member of staff can receive each month, in accordance with the limits set by the Government is £243.00 for basic rate tax payers, £124 for higher rate tax payers and £110 for additional rate tax payers. In accordance with Government guidance, parents who joined the childcare voucher scheme before 6 April 2011 have protected rights which means they receive £243 each month in childcare vouchers irrespective of their tax band.

Childcare voucher amounts are deducted from staff salary.

For staff on contracted maternity leave, we deduct childcare vouchers from maternity pay for six months. During the additional 13 week Statutory Maternity Pay period the FCO pays for the childcare vouchers. Should staff then opt to take a period of Additional Maternity Leave, childcare vouchers temporarily cease until the officer returns to work.

Some of the information you have requested (relating to your second question) is being withheld under Section 43(2) of the FOIA. Section 43(2) protects information which would be likely to prejudice existing or future commercial proceedings of any person (including the public authority holding it). Section 43 of the Freedom of Information Act is a qualified exemption and we are required to consider the balance of the public interest in releasing or withholding the information

The use of this exemption was carefully considered. The factors in favour of disclosure of this information, including the general public interest and greater transparency and accountability, were carefully weighed against the need to allow business-people and commercial organisations the space to conduct their lawful business competitively and without fear of disclosure of sensitive commercial information. We consider that this transparency also poses risks to the protection of commercially confidential information. Failure to protect such commercially sensitive information could limit the number of companies willing to provide their services to the FCO, reducing our ability to keep our costs down. In this case after such consideration we believe that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in its release.

Yours sincerely,

Human Resources Directorate



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.