



Ministry of Defence

**Defence Resources Secretariat
Ministry of Defence
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E-mail: **DGFinance-SecParliamentaryFOI@mod.uk**

Reference: **FOI2016/02213**

[REDACTED]

E-mail: [REDACTED]

Date: **17 March 2016**

Dear [REDACTED],

Your correspondence dated 18 Feb 2016 has been considered to be a request for information in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000. You requested the following information:

- (a) On how many occasions since 2010 your department has paid bills to private businesses more than 60 days after the date the invoice was received?*
- (b) On how many occasions since 2010 your department has paid bills to small businesses more than 60 days after the date the invoice was received?*
- (c) What the total value of all bills paid to private businesses by your department more than 60 days after the date the invoice was received?*

Please find below the information you requested.

I am writing to confirm that MOD holds information on the subject you have requested. However, I have to advise you that we will not be able to answer your request without exceeding the appropriate limit. This is because to retrieve and extract information in scope of your request would involve inspecting every contract to identify if the Vendor class was a private business or a small business because the database used only identifies if they are Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

Section 12 of the Act makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit, which for central government is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 3.5 working days in determining whether the department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting it.

The MOD may be able to provide some information in scope of your request if you reduce or refine your request to bring the cost of compliance under the limit. This might be done by requesting bill payments in relation to contract spend with SMEs.

Please contact me if you would like to refine your request or require advice on doing so.

Under Section 16 of the FOIA, public authorities are required to provide advice and assistance while processing FOI requests, and I have therefore included some additional information below that you may find useful.

Information on the percentage of correctly submitted invoices paid within 30 days is published on Gov.uk each year in the MOD's Annual Report & Accounts and below you will find the web links and waymarking to this specific information.

2010-11 – 99.46% - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mod-resource-accounts-2010-11>
[paragraph 8.84 on page 69]

2011-12 – 100% - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mod-annual-report-and-accounts-2011-12>
[paragraph 8.87 on page 75]

2012-13 - 100% - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mod-annualreport-and-accounts-201213>
[paragraph 7.60 on page 66]

2013-14 - 99.99% - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-ministryof-defence-annual-report-and-accounts-2013-to-2014>
[paragraph 7.64 on page 71]

2014-15 - 100% - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ministry-ofdefence-annual-report-and-accounts-2014-to-2015>
[paragraph 2.3.57 on page 69]

The Department's invoices, with the exception of some payments to suppliers made by units locally, are paid through the Defence Business Services organisation. The figures provided relate to payments made by that organisation.

The MOD processes over four million invoices a year totalling some £26 billion. As signatories of the Prompt Payment Code, the MOD is committed to paying its suppliers promptly.

If you are not satisfied with this response or you wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of your request, then you should contact me in the first instance. If informal resolution is not possible and you are still dissatisfied then you may apply for an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, 1st Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review must be made within 40 working days of the date on which the attempt to reach informal resolution has come to an end.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website, <http://www.ico.org.uk>.

I hope you find this helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Defence Resources Secretariat