



Ministry of Defence

Ministry of Defence
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Ref: [redacted]

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16 February 2015

Dear [redacted]

Thank you for your email of 9 January in which you requested the following information:

I would like to know how many service men and women have identified their sexuality as gay, bisexual, transgender, homosexual and lesbian on their JPA file. I would also like all emails, memos and minutes of meeting relating to the decision as to why service personnel should be asked to identify their sexuality on their JPA file.

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence. I can confirm that the MOD does hold some information within the scope of your request, and I apologise for the time it has taken to reply.

The Ministry of Defence encourages diversity at all levels. The option for Service personnel to declare their sexual orientation is not a new facility. This has been available since November 2011, to trainees as part of our Recruit Trainee Survey and Cadet Officer Survey. This was an interim solution pending an upgrade to our Joint Personnel Administration database (JPA). This upgrade was completed in November 2014 and all Service personnel have been encouraged to declare their sexual orientation. The declaration includes a "prefer not to say" option. The table below shows the number of men and women who have declared their sexuality on JPA since the introduction of recording sexual orientation was rolled out on 24 November 2014.

Table with 3 columns: Category, Males, Females. Rows include Gay men (248), Bisexual (86), Gay women/lesbian (n/a), and Prefer not to say (829).

Making a declaration is not mandatory but collecting data where individuals are willing to give it will give us a better understanding of the composition of our Armed Forces and help ensure our policies and practices fully support our personnel. Sexual Orientation monitoring will enable Defence to create an environment where all personnel, irrespective of their sexual orientation, feel comfortable, valued and confident to remain.

In regard to the second part of your question that asks for "all emails, memos and minutes", it has been assessed that the costs for providing this information will exceed the appropriate limit. Under Section 12 of the FOIA, we are not obliged to comply with your request as the appropriate limit is specified in regulations and for central government is set at £600.

This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 3 and a half working days in determining whether the Department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting the information. It is estimated that it would take approximately fourteen days to comply with the request. This is because the information is held in different document libraries, and there are over 1720 electronic records dating back to November 2011 to examine, requiring significant effort to extract it. Unfortunately we cannot refine your request to bring it within the appropriate limit.

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.gov.uk>. I hope this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Defence Personnel Secretariat