



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Human Resources Directorate
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
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23 February 2018

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0089-18

Thank you for your email of 26 January 2018 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

Thank you very much for clarifying the situation with this request.

I would like to narrow it in order to bring the time it would take to respond down to the acceptable limit.

Please can you just tell me

- 1) The number of civil servants granted Special Unpaid Leave in order to take up a job in the private sector in every one of the five financial years since 2013/2014?*
- 2) The names of the private sector companies with which civil servants were granted Special Unpaid Leave to take jobs in every one of the five financial years since 2013/2014?*
- 3) How many of the people granted Special Unpaid Leave to take up jobs in the private sector during the past five financial years have returned to the department?*

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.

Special unpaid leave (SUPL) for work is an opportunity for the FCO to share best practice and learn from other external organisations. The FCO supports SUPL for work applications where the work is directly and closely related to a specific FCO area of interest and is in line with our strategic priorities. Any SUPL for work applications are considered in the context of the Civil Service wider Business Appointments rules. SUPL is not given for work outside the FCO which might in any way affect or impinge upon employees or their work in the Diplomatic Service or Home Civil Service. We have interpreted your question regarding

“private sector” to mean any organisations that are not public sector, third sector or NGOs. Please find below our response to your questions.

1) The number of civil servants granted Special Unpaid Leave in order to take up a job in the private sector in every one of the five financial years since 2013/2014?

In total since 2013, 45 officers have taken special unpaid leave for work, and were working for the private sector. As at 26 January 2018, the numbers are as follows;

FY 2013-2014 - 4

FY 2014-2015 - 14

FY 2015-2016 - 8

FY 2016-2017 - 14

FY 2017- 2018 - 5

2) The names of the private sector companies with which civil servants were granted Special Unpaid Leave to take jobs in every one of the five financial years since 2013/2014?

This information has been withheld as disclosing the names of the private sector companies with which FCO staff were granted SUPPL in every financial year since 2013, combined with the figures provided above, could potentially allow individuals to be identified. It is our view that disclosure would contravene one of the data protection principles. In such circumstances sections 40(2) and (3) of the Freedom of Information Act apply. In this case, our view is that disclosure would breach the first data protection principle. This states that personal data should be processed fairly and lawfully. It is the fairness aspect of this principle, which, in our view, would be breached by disclosure. In such circumstances, s.40 confers an absolute exemption on disclosure. There is, therefore, no public interest test to apply.

3) How many of the people granted Special Unpaid Leave to take up jobs in the private sector during the past five financial years have returned to the department?

In the past five financial years, five officers who took up Special Unpaid Leave to work in the private sector have returned to the FCO.

Yours sincerely,

Human Resources Directorate

