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Our ref: FOI2019/18749  
30 September 2019

Dear [Redacted]

### REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: Sick leave

Thank you for your request for information of 2nd September about sick leave. We have handled your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

You asked;

*I would like to do as you suggest and limit the scope of my query. I will limit it to the first four questions.*

*Reminder:*

- 1. How many sick days have civil servants in this department taken this year from Jan 1st up to 31st May 2019?*
- 2. What was the equivalent number of sick days taken in the same time period (Jan 1st - May 31) in a) 2018; b) 2017; c) 2016; d) 2015; e) 2014?*
- 3. How many sick days did civil servants in the department take in total in a) 2014; b) 2015; c) 2016; d) 2017; e) 2018?*
- 4. Have any additional measures been taken by the department, in 2019, to help civil servants deal with stress?*

Please see the information below:

Period	Number of Sick Days	Staff average FTE for Period	Average Working Days Lost Per FTE in Period
1 Jan 14 to 31 May 14	2301	2123	1.08
1 Jan 15 to 31 May 15	3503	2119	1.65
1 Jan 16 to 31 May 16	2527	1880	1.34
1 Jan 17 to 31 May 17	2138	1969	1.09

1 Jan 18 to 31 May 18	4047	3493	1.16
1 Jan 19 to 31 May 19	3935	4164	0.94

Period	Number of Sick Days	Staff average FTE for Period	Average Working Days Lost Per FTE in Period
1 Jan 14 to 31 Dec 14	5326	2137	2.49
1 Jan 15 to 31 Dec 15	7259	2046	3.55
1 Jan 16 to 31 Dec 16	4906	1822	2.69
1 Jan 17 to 31 Dec 17	5354	2347	2.28
1 Jan 18 to 31 Dec 18	9365	3697	2.53

In the last year we have reviewed, refreshed and reinforced our various services and support mechanisms in place to support employee mental health and stress. This has included benchmarking against the core and enhanced standards in the 'Thriving at Work Report'. For example we have implemented Mental Health First Aiders to support individuals in crisis, an internal employee-led mental health 'buddy' network, and employees have access to an external provider Employee Assistance Programme, and Occupational Health Service. Staff and Line Managers are encouraged to notify work-related stress to the Safety, Health and Wellbeing team; follow up conversations help to identify areas to address and ensure individuals are signposted to appropriate support. A programme of regular wellbeing related webinars are available and we consult with areas of the business to provide bespoke health and wellbeing services as needed.

Information disclosed in response to this FOIA request is releasable to the public. In keeping with the spirit and effect of the FOIA and the government's Transparency Agenda, this letter and the information disclosed to you may be placed on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk), together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context. No information identifying you will be placed on the GOV.UK website.

We attach Annex A, explaining the copyright that applies to the information being released to you, and Annex B giving contact details should you be unhappy with the service you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter please contact me.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted]

**Information Rights Team**

[InformationRequests@defra.gov.uk](mailto:InformationRequests@defra.gov.uk)

## **Annex A**

### **Copyright**

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## **Annex B**

### **Complaints**

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request you may make a complaint or appeal against our decision under section 17(7) of the FOIA or under regulation 11 of the EIRs, as applicable, within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to Andrew Mobsby, Head of Information Rights, Area 5B, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR (email: [InformationRequests@defra.gov.uk](mailto:InformationRequests@defra.gov.uk)) and he will arrange for an internal review of your case. Details of Defra's complaints procedure are on our [website](#).

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, section 50 of the FOIA and regulation 18 of the EIRs gives you the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) for a decision. Please note that generally the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted Defra's own complaints procedure. The ICO can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF