



[Redacted]

By email: [Redacted]

Our ref: FOI2020/01081
10 February 2020

Dear [Redacted],

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: Sick Leave

Thank you for your request for information of 17 January 2020 about sick leave. We have handled your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

The information you requested and our response are detailed below.

Please can you provide the total amount of staff hours lost to absence for staff illness in each of the last three calendar years (2017, 2018, 2019).

Please can you also detail the three main reasons detailed for staff absence.

I would like the above information to be provided to me as paper or electronic copies.

If this request is too wide or unclear, I would be grateful if you could contact me as I understand that under the Act, you are required to advise and assist requesters. If any of this information is already in the public domain, please can you direct me to it, with page references and URLs if necessary.

If the release of any of this information is prohibited on the grounds of breach of confidence, I ask that you supply me with copies of the confidentiality agreement and remind you that information should not be treated as confidential if such an agreement has not been signed.

I understand that you are required to respond to my request within the 20 working days after you receive this request. I would be grateful if you could confirm in writing that you have received this request.

I look forward to hearing from you.

The table below shows the total sick days taken in the last three calendar years:

Year	2017	2018	2019
Days taken	5353.93	9364.51	10747.58
Average Working Days Lost (AWDL)	2.3	2.5	2.4
Full Time Equivalent (FTE)	3383.58	4032.60	4764.85
Headcount	3535	4204	4952



In each of the last three years to the three main reasons for sickness absence were Mental Health, Respiratory Systems (including Colds) and Musculoskeletal Systems.

Like all Government departments Defra follows Cabinet Office guidelines in recording sickness absence as days taken, not hours taken. Sickness absence is calculated on the Full Time Equivalent (FTE) of each member of permanent staff, known as Average Working Days Lost (AWDL). Simply this is calculated on a 12 month rolling period using the total number of days lost divided by the staff years of those staff who have taken sickness absence. This is the standard way sickness absence is monitored across Government being also used by the ONS for all employers when comparisons are made.

We have included the AWDL to put this data into context to explain it is not a simple doubling of sickness absence between 2017 and 2019. So, although the department's FTE and headcount has increased over this period (as also shown) along with the total sickness days taken, AWDL has remained constant.

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

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) 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