



Ministry
of Defence

Ministry of Defence

Defence Business Services Secretariat
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Ref: FOI2020/04664

Email: DBSRES-Secretariat@mod.gov.uk

7 May 2020

Dear

Thank you for your email of 19 April 2020 to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) requesting the following information:

"I am interested in the ease of hiring and firing within the Civil Service. I am writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request the following information:

• 1. Number of new starters in the Department who were also new entrants to the Civil Service in each year from 2014 to 2018 (inclusive)

o % of those new starters in each year who failed to meet the conditions of their probation and had their employment terminated.

• 2. Number of civil servants who started a new role in the Department on promotion (either from within the Department or another Department) from 2014 to 2018 (inclusive)

o % of those civil servants in each year who failed to meet the conditions of their probation and were reverted to their previous grade.

• 3. Length of the probation period in your Department (split out by new starter/promoted civil servant or other factors if necessary)

o Please state whether and how the length of probation period has changed since the year 2015.

• 4. Number of staff in the Department who had their employment terminated for performance reasons in the calendar years 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019. Please also provide total staff figures at the start of each calendar year to allow for calculation of the percentage of total staff who had employment terminated each year.

o Of the total number of contract terminations for performance reasons each year, how many were related to not meeting conditions for probation?

• 5. Spreadsheet of each position advertised in the calendar year 2019, showing: the position's Grade; how many applicants applied; length of time between the position being advertised and a successful candidate starting in post; whether the post was advertised to external applicants outside of the civil service; and whether the successful candidate came from within the Department/another Department/outside the civil service.

o If this data is unavailable or cannot be provided in this form for any other reason, please provide all the relevant information you can, e.g. instead of providing a spreadsheet of each position you might provide average figures.

I am sending this request to 16 Departments, but if there is a centrally held record for the whole Civil Service then please feel free to provide a single response."

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 and I can confirm that some of the information in scope of your request is held. However, I must advise you that we would not be able to answer your request without exceeding the appropriate cost limit.

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

I have to advise you that the information regarding questions 1, 2 and 4 of your request, specifically the sub-questions relating to those who failed to meet the conditions of their probation, is not held centrally. To determine which individuals failed to meet the conditions of their probation would involve interrogating the personnel files of every individual who has been dismissed with a reason code which might be relevant between 2014 and 2018 in order to find the number of probation terminations. It is estimated that this task would take 646 hours to complete, at the rate of £25 per hour, this is equal to £16,150, far exceeding the appropriate cost limit.

Under Section 16 of the FOIA (Advice and Assistance) the department may be able to provide some information in scope of your request if you were to refine your request by removing the sub questions in Q1, Q2 and Q4. Although it is not guaranteed that your refined request may fall within the cost limit, we would be happy to look at it again.

If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office in the first instance

If you wish to complain about the handling of your request, or the content of this response, you can request an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, Ground Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.gov.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review should be made within 40 working days of the date of this response.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may raise your complaint directly to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not normally investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website at <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely,

Defence Business Services (Secretariat)