

Ref: FOI2020/05777

15 June 2020

Dear

Thank you for your email of 18 May 2020 to the Ministry of Defence (MOD), requesting the following information:

- “1) Please tell me how much was spent by your department on paying for the provision of new items of office furniture and equipment to facilitate staff to work from home during the coronavirus lockdown.*
- 2) Please state how much was spent on paying for the transportation of office furniture and equipment, which was not new but had already been in use, to your staff members’ homes during the coronavirus lockdown.*
- 3) Please provide me with the cost and the make and model of the **single** most expensive item of equipment or furniture that was bought for a staff member to facilitate their working from home during the coronavirus lockdown.”*

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 MOD and I can confirm all information in scope of your request is held. However, I have to advise you that as the information is not held centrally, we would not be able to answer your questions without exceeding the appropriate cost limit.

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

All claims are approved by local Top Level Budget Managers across MOD, who are responsible for ensuring each claim is appropriate and retain accompanying paperwork such as receipts, etc. Once a claim has been duly authorised by the Budget Manager, most are processed automatically. If it has not been authorised correctly it is rejected and returned to claimant for corrective action. No central record of full claims details or receipts exists, and there is no ongoing database of claims maintained or readily available.

To provide a full picture would require full interrogation of the claims paperwork, which in most cases would mean referring back to the claimant's employing unit or Budget Manager. To examine all potential claims would take 12-15 minutes per claim and, therefore, exceed the cost limit. 1,968 claims were made from lockdown commencement up to and including 5 May 2020, of which a minimum of 368 have been identified which might be claims related to Working From Home; this would take at least 82 hours at a total cost of £2070.

However, under Section 16 (Advice and Assistance), the Department may be able to provide some information in the scope of your request if you were to refine your request by indicating whether you were interested in any particular branch of the MOD. 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