



Homes
England

Date: 20 August 2020

Our Ref: RFI3044

Tel: 0300 1234 500

Email: infogov@homesengland.gov.uk

Making homes happen

██████████
By Email Only

Windsor House
Homes England – 6th Floor
50 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0TL

Dear ██████████

RE: Request for Information – RFI3044

Thank you for your recent email, which was processed under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). You requested the following information:

I would like to request the following information from your organisation under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

1. *What is your organisations current staff headcount?*
2. *What was your organisations annual budget for the financial year 2019-2020?*
3. *Does your organisation have or contract with a counter fraud specialist?*
4. *If yes to question 3, is this provision employed directly by your organisation, outsourced to a public sector provider or outsourced to a private sector provider?*
5. *What level of provision do you have to tackle fraud, bribery and corruption within your organisation (number of funded days a year)?*
6. *How many fraud, bribery or corruption referrals did your organisation receive during the financial year 2019-2020?*
7. *How many criminal investigations did your organisation carry out during the financial year 2019-2020?*
8. *What was the fraud loss figure identified by your organisation during the financial year 2019-2020?*
9. *How much of your identified fraud loss was recovered by your organisation during the financial year 2019-2020?*
10. *How many criminal sanctions relating to fraud, bribery and corruption did your organisation apply during the financial year 2019-2020?*
11. *How many disciplinary sanctions relating to fraud, bribery or corruption did your organisation apply during the financial year 2019-2020?*
12. *What was the total cost of your organisations counter fraud staffing during 2019-2020?*

We wrote to you to clarify question 12 and you provided the following clarification:

- *In relation to question 12 it relates to the funding/costs of Homes England for the services of an accredited counter fraud specialist in the financial year.*
- *To clarify the question around counter fraud staff, this relates to dedicated resource employed by your organisation whose responsibility it is to deal with fraud, bribery and corruption.*

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- *The qualification relates to any specific accreditation in relation to investigating or managing fraud bribery and corruption, this may include ACFS (accredited counter fraud specialist) PINS, PIP2 or Cabinet Office recognition through the counter fraud professional standards.*

Response

We can confirm that we do hold some of the requested information. We will address each of your points in turn.

1. What is your organisations current staff headcount?

As at 1 July 2020 (the date of your request) Homes England employed 1232 members of staff. This figure includes employees and agency staff.

2. What was your organisations annual budget for the financial year 2019-2020?

We are able to inform you that we do hold the information that you have requested. However, we rely on section 22, exemption where information is intended for future publication under the FOIA.

The full text of the legislation can be found on the following link and we have quoted section 22 below for ease. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/section/22>

Section 22 - Information intended for future publication.

(1) Information is exempt information if:

- (a) the information is held by the public authority with a view to its publication, by the authority or any other person, at some future date (whether determined or not),
- (b) the information was already held with a view to such publication at the time when the request for information was made, and
- (c) it is reasonable in all the circumstances that the information should be withheld from disclosure until the date referred to in paragraph (a).

(2) The duty to confirm or deny does not arise if, or to the extent that, compliance with section 1(1)(a) would involve the disclosure of any information (whether or not already recorded) which falls within subsection (1).

Section 22 is a qualified exemption. This means that in order to withhold information under this exemption, we must consider the public interest in disclosure.

Public Interest Test – Factors in favour of disclosure

- Homes England is compliant with the government agenda of transparency and recognises the benefit of publishing the information, particularly when it concerns how Homes England undertakes its work.

Public Interest Test – Factors in favour of non-disclosure

- The requested information will be published in our annual report.

Our annual report is published and verified in consultation with our sponsor department, the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and is presented to Parliament



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pursuant to paragraphs 11 and 12 of Schedule 1 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 by the Secretary of State.

The full text of Schedule 1 in the legislation can be found on the following link:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/17/schedule/1>.

- The annual report is subject to approval and verification before presentation to parliament and subsequent official publication. Releasing the requested information before it has been collated and prepared for release in the annual report would be likely to result in inaccurate or misleading information being in the public domain. Without proper collation and verification of the data we would be unable to provide the relevant context to ensure that it is not misunderstood. This would not be in the public interest as it could result in public mistrust of government departments and the general transparency of government.
- Though we acknowledge the public interest in the information requested, we cannot identify a wider public interest in publishing the information ahead of the official publication.

Therefore after careful consideration we have concluded that at this time, the balance of the public interest favours the non-disclosure.

Advice and Assistance

In compliance with the Section 45 Code of Practice (Paragraph 14) and to offer advice and assistance under section 16 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 we can advise that the anticipated publication of the annual report for the financial year 2019-2020 is November 2020. The annual report will be published on the Homes England website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/homes-england>.

For context, the link to the previous year's annual report is as follows:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homes-england-annual-report-financial-statements-201819>

3. Does your organisation have or contract with a counter fraud specialist?

Homes England employs three full time members of staff who specialise in dealing with counter fraud.

4. If yes to question 3, is this provision employed directly by your organisation, outsourced to a public sector provider or outsourced to a private sector provider?

The counter fraud specialists detailed in Q3 are employed directly by Homes England, within our Financial Crime Compliance Team.

5. What level of provision do you have to tackle fraud, bribery and corruption within your organisation (number of funded days a year)?

As per Q3 and Q4, the provision is three full time members of staff who specialise in counter fraud.

Alongside this full-time provision, the Audit, Risk, Legal, and Procurement teams also play a significant role in investigating and tackling talking fraud, bribery and corruption.

The provision is also in the form of Policies, Procedures, Management Information, control testing and training followed by all Homes England staff.



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6. How many fraud, bribery or corruption referrals did your organisation receive during the financial year 2019-2020?

35

7. How many criminal investigations did your organisation carry out during the financial year 2019-2020?

35

8. What was the fraud loss figure identified by your organisation during the financial year 2019-2020?
&

9. How much of your identified fraud loss was recovered by your organisation during the financial year 2019-2020?

We are able to inform you that we do hold the information that you have requested. However, we rely on section 22, exemption where information is intended for future publication under the FOIA.

The full text of the legislation can be found on the following link:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/section/22>

We can confirm that this information will be published in our annual report. The public interest arguments to withhold the information under section 22 until the official publication of the annual report are contained within our response to question 2 above.

10. How many criminal sanctions relating to fraud, bribery and corruption did your organisation apply during the financial year 2019-2020?

None

11. How many disciplinary sanctions relating to fraud, bribery or corruption did your organisation apply during the financial year 2019-2020?

None

12. What was the total cost of your organisations counter fraud staffing during 2019-2020?

- In relation to question 12 it relates to the funding/costs of Homes England for the services of an accredited counter fraud specialist in the financial year.
- To clarify the question around counter fraud staff, this relates to dedicated resource employed by your organisation whose responsibility it is to deal with fraud, bribery and corruption.
- The qualification relates to any specific accreditation in relation to investigating or managing fraud bribery and corruption, this may include ACFS (accredited counter fraud specialist) PINS, PIP2 or Cabinet Office recognition through the counter fraud professional standards.

We can confirm that we do not hold the information as requested.

As advised in our response to questions 3, 4 and 5 Homes England employs three full time members of staff who specialise in counter-fraud. However these three members of staff are employed within the wider Financial Crime Compliance team and their responsibilities include, but are not limited to, counter-fraud. Therefore, it is not possible to extract the cost to Homes England for 'counter fraud staffing' from these individuals' total salaries.



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Furthermore, there are employees who are heavily involved in counter-fraud within other teams whose contribution in terms of 'cost of counter-fraud staffing' cannot be extracted to provide a response to this question. Colleagues within the Audit, Risk, Legal, and Procurement teams play a significant role in counter-fraud, and all of Homes England staff have counter fraud obligations.

Advice and Assistance

In order to offer further advice and assistance under section 16 of the FOIA, we can advise that Homes England's Counter Fraud Policy is published on the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homes-england-counter-fraud-policy>

Right to Appeal

If you are not happy with the information that has been provided or the way in which your request has been handled you may request an internal review by writing to;

The Information Governance Team
Homes England – 6th Floor
Windsor House
50 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0TL

Or by email to infogov@homesengland.gov.uk

You may also complain to the Information Commissioner however, the Information Commissioner does usually expect the internal review procedure to be exhausted in the first instance.

The Information Commissioner's details can be found via the following link

<https://ico.org.uk/>

Please note that the contents of your request and this response are also subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Homes England may be required to disclose your request and our response accordingly.

Yours sincerely,

The Information Governance Team
For Homes England

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