

Ella Bridges
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data.access@justice.gov.uk

14 September 2020

Dear Ms Bridges,

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Request – 200816001

Thank you for your request dated 16 August in which you asked for the following information from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ):

‘Please supply the following information relating to the period from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

- 1. The total cost of the Defence Solicitor Call Centre (DSCC) to the Legal Aid Agency.***
- 2. Total number of cases logged by the DSCC.***
- 3. Total number of complaints made with respect to the DSCC.’***

I can confirm that the MoJ holds the information you have requested to answer questions 2 and 3 and I provided it below. However, we are unable provide the information to answer question 1 as this information is exempt from disclosure under section 43(2) of the FOIA, because it would cause prejudice to commercial interests.

Section 43 is a qualified exemption which means that the decision to disclose the requested material is subject to the public interest test. When assessing whether or not it was in the public interest to disclose the information to you, we took into account the following factors:

Public interest considerations favouring disclosure

- Disclosure would be generally consistent with the government’s wider commitment to transparency.

Public interest considerations favouring withholding the information

- HGS UK Ltd (the outsourced provider of the Duty Solicitor Call Centre) bid for this contract on the understanding that the information they supplied would be confidential. Disclosing pricing information now would undermine that expectation, and so would cause damage the commercial credibility of the department.

- The pricing information for HGS UK Ltd contains market-sensitive data. A response under the FOIA is a response to the world at large (i.e. including competitor firms). Placing such information in the public domain would damage the commercial position of those firms whose details would be disclosed in such a manner.

The information to answer questions 2 and 3 and I provided it below.

Invoice Period	No of cases logged (Deployed)	No of Complaints
Aug-19	68,685*	74
Sep-19	45,615*	128
Oct-19	61,057	112
Nov-19	60,368	104
Dec-19	56,244	57
Jan-20	61,442	77
Feb-20	56,415	41
Mar-20	51,695	56
Apr-20	44,495	40
May-20	56357	36
Jun-20	58425	34
Jul-20	63,859	24

Appeal Rights

If you are not satisfied with this response you have the right to request an internal review by responding in writing to one of the addresses below within two months of the date of this response.

data.access@justice.gov.uk

Disclosure Team, Ministry of Justice

You do have the right to ask the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) to investigate any aspect of your complaint. However, please note that the ICO is likely to expect internal complaints procedures to have been exhausted before beginning their investigation.

Yours sincerely

**Information Governance
Legal Aid Agency**