

Ref: FOI2020/12476

16 February 2021

Thank you for your email of 12 November 2020 to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) requesting the following information:

- “1) How many staff – both political and civil servants – work in your department?*
- 2) How many official complaints have been made by staff about their treatment at work based on their gender in the past 12 months?*
- 3) How many official complaints have been made by staff about their treatment at work based on their sexual preference in the past 12 months?*
- 4) How many official complaints have been made by staff about their treatment at work based on their race in the past 12 months?”*

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 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.

The MOD have identified 182 complaint cases for the period 1 December 2019 to 30 November 2020 which may fall within the scope of the request. However, each casefile would need to be manually examined to determine the nature and outcome of each complaint, which would take on average 30 minutes per file, resulting in approximately 91 hours to extract any relevant information at a cost of £2,275.

Under Section 16 (Advice and Assistance) of the FOIA, you may be interested to know that maximising Defence's ability to attract the talent we need is mission critical; if we are to safeguard the security, stability and prosperity of our nation, we must recruit and retain the very best people. Defence adheres to the legislation governing equality and diversity.

The MOD takes complaints of bullying, harassment and discrimination seriously and has put in place a number of measures, including a dedicated Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination helpline, and training to ensure staff have the necessary tools to seek help and intervene where they experience or witness instances of bullying and harassment.

The Department may be able to provide information in the scope of question one, if you could confirm whether you are only interested in MOD Main, or if you would like the figures to include the Department's Executive Agencies, such as the UK Hydrographic Office and Defence Equipment & Support. It would also be helpful if you could confirm if by "political" staff, you are referring to Ministers and their Special Advisers.

It may also be possible to provide some information for questions two to four if you were to refine your request by limiting the time period significantly to reduce the number of cases to be examined.

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](mailto: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

A solid black rectangular box redacting the signature of the sender.

Defence Business Services Secretariat