

FOI 23/695

Dear

Thank you for your request of 22 September 2023, under the Freedom of Information Act. You requested:

“Please can you send me copies of the minutes of the following meetings :

a) the Covid-19 Vaccines Benefit Risk Expert Working Group from 1 September 2020 to 2 December 2020

b) the Covid-19 Vaccines Safety Surveillance Expert Working Group from 1 May 2020 to 2 December 2020”

We confirm that we hold the information you have requested.

For the Covid-19 Vaccines Benefit Risk Expert Working Group, we have determined that the information is exempt from disclosure under section 22 of the FOI Act. This is explained as follows:

Section 22 provides an exemption for information that is intended to be published in the future and states that:

“Information is exempt if, at the time when the public authority receives a request for it:

- (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).”

Prior to receipt of your email of 22 September 2023 the decision had been made to publish the minutes of this EWG. Therefore, we consider that points a, b and c above apply in the context of the information you have requested.

As Section 22 is a qualified exemption, we have considered whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption is greater than public interest in disclosing the requested information.

We do appreciate that there is a strong public interest in disclosure of the COVID-19 VBR EWG minutes, and this has informed our decision to publish the minutes for the widest public benefit. However, on this occasion, we consider that the greatest public interest lies in maintaining the proposal to publish these minutes, and our view is that the public interest therefore favours maintaining the section 22 exemption. Under section 22 a date for publication does not need to be set; however, we are working to determine a schedule of publication.

For the Covid-19 Vaccines Safety Surveillance Expert Working Group, please find copies of the minutes attached. Please note that redactions have been applied as described below.

For all minutes

Some names under Invited experts, visiting experts and observers have been left visible because they are already in the public domain under 'COVID-19 Vaccines Safety Surveillance Methodologies EWG' - [Membership - Commission on Human Medicines - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). Those names which have been redacted are for those names which are not published.

There are also some redactions to names under the 'MHRA observers' section, these are in keeping with our established practice to redacting staff names based on seniority.

In both cases the information that has been redacted is exempt under Section 40 (Personal Information). Section 40 provides that personal information may be exempt from release where to do so would contravene data protection principles.

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 25th June 2020

In addition to the redactions described under 'For all minutes' above, redactions have been applied to the Conflict of Interest Policy section, between items 1.3 and 1.5. This was a welcome from the chair to one of the individuals whose name has been redacted from the list of attendees. This information is exempt under Section 40 (Personal Information). Section 40 provides that personal information may be exempt from release where to do so would contravene data protection principles.

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 23rd July 2020

In addition to the redactions described under 'For all minutes' above, redactions have been applied to the Conflict of Interest Policy section. This information covers apologies of observers and visiting experts. This information is exempt under Section 40 (Personal Information). Section 40 provides that personal information may be exempt from release where to do so would contravene data protection principles.

Please note that beneath the AOB section each set of minutes includes date(s) for future meetings, note that these were proposed dates at the time the meeting was held, they did not all take place.

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within two months of the date you receive this response and addressed to: info@mhra.gov.uk
Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you were to remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the internal review, you would have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Please bear in mind that the Information Commissioner will not normally review our

handling of your request unless you have first contacted us to conduct an internal review. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office

Wycliffe House

Water Lane

Wilmslow

Cheshire

SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely

MHRA Customer Experience Centre

Communications and engagement team

Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency

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