

FOI 23/872

Dear

Thank you for your request of 12 November 2023, under the Freedom of Information Act. In relation to an article in the Daily Telegraph on 9 November 2023, you requested:

*“It has since emerged from multiple sources on social media, that the Telegraph have as result of publishing the article, received what has been described as a ‘threatening’ phone call from a senior member of staff at the MHRA, saying they would be banned from future press briefings and press notices if they didn’t soften the news.
Please could you confirm or deny whether this did indeed take place, if so, whose decision at the MHRA was it to ring the Telegraph and who was the senior member of MHRA staff delegated with that task and what does ‘softening the news’, mean?”*

We understand this relates to an online article [published on 8 November 2023 at 5pm](#) that includes the following excerpt:

“In March 2021, The Telegraph was one of the first newspapers to imply a [causal link between the jab and blood clots](#) after Norwegian scientists suggested a possible mechanism.

“On the day we published the story we received a threatening phone call from a senior official at the MHRA warning that The Telegraph would be banned from future briefings and press notices if we did not soften the news.”

The first paragraph of the article’s excerpt provides a link to its story published on 17 March 2021: [‘Link between cerebral blood clots and AstraZeneca vaccine ‘not implausible’, says German regulator’](#).

Having reviewed our records for this date, and to the best of our knowledge, we have no evidence that any phone call of this nature took 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

Or online via: <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/foi-and-eir-complaints/foi-and-eir-complaints/>

Yours sincerely

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