

Reference: 2023-088

Thank you for your email in which you requested the following information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA):

Please can you provide summary statistics to me for staffing levels at the SFO for the calendar years of 2023 (YTD) 2022, 2021, 2020 and 2019.

Please supply:

- 1. The total number of full time equivalent employees at the end of each respective year (or for 2023 the most recently available figure);**
- 2. The total number of full time equivalent positions at the end of each respective year (or for 2023 the most recently available figure);**
- 3. The average vacancy rate in each respective year (or the current vacancy rate for 2023);**
- 4. The total cost of agency staff for each respective year**

Response

I can confirm that the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) holds the information you have requested. You will be able to find the information organised by financial year on the SFO website in our Annual Reports and Accounts (ARA). Additionally, you have previously been supplied with some of this information for January 2018 to October 2022 in a previous FOI request (FOI 2022-092).

The new information you have requested in relation to the remainder of the 2023 calendar year which has not yet been published, at the time of writing, is exempt by virtue of Section 22 (1)(a) of the FOIA.

This section reads as follows:

Section 22 (1): Information is exempt 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).

How the exemption is engaged

Section 22 exempts the immediate release of information when it is planned for future publication.

The information you have requested is currently being prepared for publication, and will be available in due course, therefore it is exempt under section 22 of the FOIA.

Public interest test

Section 22 is a qualified exemption and requires consideration of the public interest in order for the exemption to be maintained. More information about exemptions, the precedent effect and the public interest test is available on the ICO's website at www.ico.org.uk. We recognise the public interest in regularly publishing information about the rate of employment and vacancy at the SFO and the costs related to these figures. We understand the importance of transparency and publicising how the organisation spends public money in meeting this public interest.

However, as explained above, the SFO takes steps to meet this by annually publishing these figures in the ARA, and the information requested for the financial year 2023-2024 is currently being processed. In addition, the public interest in releasing this information in response to individual FOI requests is ultimately outweighed by the public interest in releasing it consistently and in full.