



Government Legal Department

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[REDACTED]

Ref No: FOI 26_039

20 April 2026

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 20th March 2026 containing your request for information. The Government Legal Department ("GLD") have considered your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("the Act", "FOIA")

Request

I am researching how legal services are provided between government departments. I understand that the case recently concluded an employment tribunal case (Groom v Maritime and Coastguard Agency, MCA) that proceeded through three levels:

- Employment Tribunal (Case No: 1405350/2020)
- Employment Appeal Tribunal (Case No: EA-2022-000623-AS)
- Court of Appeal (Case No: CA-2024-001227)

The Court of Appeal gave judgment on 14 January 2026. The MCA announced in March 2026 that it would not appeal to the Supreme Court.

I request information about any legal services GLD provided to the MCA for these proceedings.

PRIMARY REQUEST

1. Confirmation of involvement:
Did GLD provide legal services to the MCA in these proceedings?
If yes, at which stages (ET / EAT / Court of Appeal)?
What type of services (legal advice, representation, instructing counsel)?
2. Costs:
Total fees charged by GLD to the MCA for each stage
Breakdown showing:
GLD solicitor/lawyer time
External counsel/barrister fees (if GLD instructed barristers on MCA's behalf)
Disbursements (court fees, expert fees, etc.)
Dates when invoices were sent to MCA
3. External barristers:
If GLD instructed barristers on the MCA's behalf, please provide:

- Names and chambers of the barristers
- Total fees paid to each barrister
- Breakdown by stage
- 4. Billing arrangements:
 - How were GLD's services charged to the MCA? (hourly rates, fixed fees, framework agreement, other)
 - Have all fees been recovered from the MCA, or were any costs subsidised/written off?
- 5. Staffing:
 - Number of GLD staff assigned to the case
 - Grade levels of staff involved
 - Total estimated hours (if recorded) Preferred format: Table or spreadsheet

ALTERNATIVE REQUEST (if primary exceeds cost limits) If the primary request exceeds Section 12 limits, please instead provide:

1. Total fees invoiced to MCA for each stage:
 - o Employment Tribunal: £
 - o Employment Appeal Tribunal: £
 - o Court of Appeal:
2. Overall total across all three stages: £_
3. Approximate split for overall costs:
 - o GLD internal costs (solicitor/lawyer time):
 - o External counsel costs (barrister fees):
 - o Disbursements: £_
4. Confirmation of whether external barristers were instructed
5. Time period covered (start and end dates)
6. Brief description of services provided

This reduced request should be straightforward to compile from billing records.

SECTION 12 AND SECTION 16

If you consider that even the alternative request would exceed appropriate time limits:

Please advise:

1. What information CAN be provided within cost limits?
2. What is the estimated time/cost to provide each element I've requested?
3. What scope reduction would bring the request within limits?

Under Section 16 (duty to provide advice and assistance), please work with me to identify what information can reasonably be provided. I am happy to refine my request based on your advice.

I am flexible and willing to accept:

- Less detailed breakdown of costs
- Aggregated figures where itemisation is burdensome
- Whatever format exists in your billing systems

The key information I am seeking is: the total amount GLD charged to the MCA for these proceedings, with some indication of how costs were split between internal work and external counsel.

CONTEXT FOR REQUEST

I am interested in understanding:

- How inter-departmental legal services are costed and charged
 - The scale of resources government legal departments commit to employment litigation
 - Comparative costs of in-house vs external legal representation
 - Whether multi-stage litigation represents value for money
- There is public interest in transparency regarding:
- Government legal service costs
 - How taxpayer money is spent on litigation
 - Efficiency of government legal operations

Response

Pursuant to Section 1(1)(a) of the Act, GLD confirms that it holds the information you have requested with regards to your alternative request.

1. Total fees invoiced to MCA for each stage:
 - Employment Tribunal: **£25,110.84_Disbursements £14,412.27 + VAT £2,882.45 Total costs billed to date: £42,405.56**
 - Employment Appeal Tribunal: **£17,254.44 Disbursements £20,645.5 VAT_£4129.10 Total costs billed to date £42,029.04**
 - Court of Appeal: **£48,739.98_Disbursements £25,287.7 VAT_£5,057.54_Total costs billed to date £79,085.22**
2. Overall total across all three stages: **£_163,519.82**
3. Approximate split for overall costs: **approx: 25% 25% 50%**
 - GLD internal costs (solicitor/lawyer time): **£91,105.26**
 - External counsel costs (barrister fees): **£72,414.56**
 - Disbursements: **as above £72,414.56**
4. Confirmation of whether external barristers were instructed **Yes**
5. Time period covered (start and end dates) **October 2020 - present**
6. Brief description of services **Provided Legal advisory services and representation in litigation**

This reduced request should be straightforward to compile from billing records.

Your Rights

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask GLD for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted to GLD within two months of the date of receipt of the response to your original correspondence. Please use the contact details provided at the top of this letter in order to request an internal review relating to your original request.

Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF
www.ICO.org.uk

Yours sincerely,

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