

JULY 2019 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION RESPONSES

Year	Month	FOI Reference	Topic
2019	July	FOI/19/091	The Stevens III Inquiry report into collusion between loyalist paramilitaries and state security forces
2019	July	FOI/19/092	Ministerial visit to the Resurgam Trust
2019	July	FOI/19/102	Contract register
2019	July	FOI/19/104	Cost of rectifying misprinted material
2019	July	FOI/19/105	Staff pay: gender and ethnicity breakdown
2019	July	FOI/19/107	Spending on learning and development
2019	July	FOI/19/108	Information on the Florida Four gun runners and the peace negotiator, Father Alec Reid
2019	July	FOI/19/109	Managing public money: permanent secretary objections to ministerial spending
2019	July	FOI/19/110	Brexit preparations: expenditure
2019	July	FOI/19/111	Staff training on IT and digital skills
2019	July	FOI/19/112	Stormont talks negotiators: planned drinks event
2019	July	FOI/19/113	Cybersecurity contract
2019	July	FOI/19/114	Ministerial visits within the United Kingdom
2019	July	FOI/19/115	Correspondence on abortion
2019	July	FOI/19/116	Correspondence on the Infected Blood Inquiry and Infected Blood Support Schemes
2019	July	FOI/19/117	Cyber security awareness
2019	July	FOI/19/118	Non-disclosure agreements
2019	July	FOI/19/119	Brexit preparations: messaging group chats

FOI Request Reference	FOI/19/091
Month Issued	July 2019
Request	[Requester] requests that it be provided with a full copy of the Stevens III Inquiry Report written by Sir John Stevens, the then Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service, with no redactions, deletions, removals of any sort howsoever described (the "Stevens III Report"). <i>To date, the Stevens III Report has not been made publicly available in full. Instead, only limited, redacted parts or summaries published to date. To be clear, references in this letter to the "Stevens III Report" are to a full copy of that report with no redactions, deletions, removals of any sort howsoever described.</i> [Requester] makes this request under FOIA. To the extent that the SSNI maintains that FOIA does not place the SSNI under a duty to disclose some/all of the Stevens III Report, [Requester] makes its request for a copy of the Stevens III Report in exercise of its common law rights to information and in the exercise of its Article 10 ECHR rights to information.
Response	An overview and recommendations of the Stevens Enquiry is available at: https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/issues/collusion/stevens3/stevens3summary.pdf I can confirm that the Northern Ireland Office holds a copy of the Stevens III report. The Stevens Inquiry was commissioned by the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (the RUC) the predecessors to the Police Service Northern Ireland (PSNI). We have therefore consulted with the PSNI, and I can confirm the sections of the report not already publicly available are withheld under the following sections of the Freedom of Information Act 2000: S.23 (1) - Information supplied by or relating to bodies dealing with security matters; S.24 (1) - national security; S.30 (1) and (2) - Investigations and proceedings conducted by public authorities; S.38 (1) - health and safety and; S.40 (2) - personal information. S.17 of the FOIA requires the NIO when refusing to provide such information (because the information is exempt) to provide you with a notice which: • States that fact; • Specifies the exemption in question;

- States why the exemption applies.

Section 23(1) of the FOIA relates to information supplied by or related to bodies dealing with security matters. Public authorities such as the PSNI and the security services are not required to release information covered by this exemption. Section 23 of the FOIA is an absolute exemption and the Northern Ireland Office is not required to consider whether the public interest favours disclosure of this information.

You can find out more about Section 23 by reading the extract from the FOI Act available at:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/section/23>

Section 40(2) - We are not obliged, under section 40(2) of the Act, to provide information that is the personal information of another person if releasing would contravene any of the provisions in the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA). In this instance we believe that the release of this information would contravene the first data protection principle and therefore section 40 (2) is engaged. The terms of this exemption in the FOIA mean that we do not have to consider whether or not it would be in the public interest for you to have the information.

You can find out more about Sections 40 by reading the full text of the Act, available at:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/section/40>

Section 24 - We are not obliged to provide information required for the purpose of safeguarding national security. In line with the terms of this exemption in the FOIA, we have also considered whether it would be in the public interest for us to provide you with the information, despite the exemption being applicable. In this case, we have concluded that the public interest favours withholding the information (please see below under public interest considerations).

You can find out more about s.24 by reading the full text of the Act available at:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/section/24>

Section 30 - We are not obliged to provide information held for the purposes of conducting investigations and proceedings. In this case, the information relates to:

s.30 (1): Information held by a public authority is exempt information if it has at any time been held by the authority for the purposes of—

- a) Any investigation which the public authority has a duty to conduct with a view to it being ascertained—

- (i) whether a person should be charged with an offence, or
- (ii) whether a person charged with an offence is guilty of it,
- b) Any investigation which is conducted by the authority and in the circumstances may lead to a decision by the authority to institute criminal proceedings which the authority has power to conduct, or
- c) Any criminal proceedings which the authority has power to conduct.

s.30(2): Information held by a public authority is exempt information if—

- a) It was obtained or recorded by the authority for the purposes of its functions relating to—
 - 1. investigations falling within subsection (1)(a) or (b),
 - 2. criminal proceedings which the authority has power to conduct,
 - 3. investigations (other than investigations falling within subsection (1)(a) or (b)) which are conducted by the authority for any of the purposes specified in section 31(2) and either by virtue of Her Majesty's prerogative or by virtue of powers conferred by or under any enactment, or
 - 4. civil proceedings which are brought by or on behalf of the authority and arise out of such investigations, and
- b) It relates to the obtaining of information from confidential sources.

In line with the terms of this exemption in the Freedom of Information Act, we have also considered whether it would be in the public interest for us to provide you with the information, despite the exemption being applicable. In this case, we have concluded that the public interest favours withholding the information (please see below under public interest considerations)

You can find out more about s30 by reading the full text of the Act available at:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/section/30>

Section 38 - As s38 of the FOIA is a qualified exemption, we have carried out a public interest test in reaching our decision.

In this case, we have concluded that the public interest favours withholding the information (please see below under public interest considerations).

You can find out more about Section 38 by reading the full text of the Act, available at

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/section/38>

Public interest considerations:

In favour of disclosure:

- Accountability - the information you have requested related directly to the efficiency and effectiveness of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) who instructed the investigation to be carried out. The actions of the police service (particularly in relation to crime prevention and detection), require an appropriate application of legislation. This would go some way towards reassuring those factors.
- Public Awareness - The release of this information would contribute to the quality and accuracy of public awareness / debate and would encourage the community in understanding how the PSNI carry out their duties in investigating attempted / murders.

In favour of withholding the information:

- It would not be in the public interest to release information that may prevent or hinder current and future law enforcement. Disclosure is likely to compromise the law enforcement capability of the PSNI.
- It would not be in the public interest to release information that may be of assistance to anyone involved in criminal activity. The release of information would hinder any subsequent investigation or prosecution and subsequently disrupt the administration of justice and prejudice future court cases.
- Public Safety - release of this information may adversely affect wider public safety if the criminal fraternity / less law-abiding individuals are provided with tactical advantage over the PSNI.

Conclusion:

The release of information under the FOIA must be considered a release of information into the public domain and therefore any disclosure of the requested information would clearly be information that has been obtained from and relates to certain agencies that deal with security matters. Similarly the reports contain information, which is required for the purposes of safeguarding national security.

It is not in the public interest to endanger the life of any person, nor to put current and future intelligence networks at risk. Any disclosure which may reduce the flow of information to security agencies would have a substantial impact on the ability of authorities to collect reliable and accurate intelligence. Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS) provide information at personal risk to themselves and their families, and where a CHIS is identified it can result in substantial physical harm, or mental trauma resulting from threats to the individual.

	Having weighed up competing interests we have determined that the disclosure of the requested information would not be in the public interest. We consider that the benefit that would result from the information being disclosed does not outweigh disclosing information contained in the Stevens reports. On balance, if disclosed, there could be the likelihood that the future law enforcement role of the security agencies could be compromised and the safety of individuals and the public put at risk. It cannot be justified that the public's interest would be served in releasing this specific information if either of these aspects were to be compromised in any way. Your request refers to Article 10 of the ECHR, the NIO considers that the above response satisfies any rights that may arise under Article 10.
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/19/092
Month Issued	July 2019
Request	<i>I would like to request all information held relating to the visit by Karen Bradley as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to the Resurgam Trust on 29th November 2018.</i> <i>I would like all information held by the NIO in relation to this visit. How it came about, whom the invitation was received from and any communications from the local MP regarding the event.</i>
Response	I can confirm that the Northern Ireland Office holds information within the scope of your request for information in respect of a visit Karen Bradley as Secretary of State made to Resurgam Trust; however some of this information will not be released by virtue of s40 which relates to personal information. You can find out more about these exemptions by reading the full text of the Act in the links provided. We are not obliged, under section 40(2) of the Act, to provide information that is the personal information of another person if releasing would contravene any of the provisions in the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA). In this instance we believe that the release of this information would contravene the first data protection principle and therefore section 40 (2) is engaged. The terms of this exemption in the Freedom of Information Act mean that we do not have to consider whether or not it would be in the public interest for you to have the information. You can find out more about Sections 40 by reading the full text of the Act, available at Cost limits

FOI Request Reference	FOI/19/102
Month Issued	July 2019
Request	<i>I want to submit a request for some information from the organisation, in relation to their contract's register.</i>

The contract register should display all the organisations existing/live contracts I would like the register to display the following columns/headings:

- 1. Contract Reference*
- 2. Contract Title*
- 3. Procurement Category*
- 4. Supplier Name*
- 5. Spend (Total or Annual)*
- 6. Contract Duration*
- 7. Contract Extensions*
- 8. Contract Starting Date*
- 9. Expiration Date*
- 10. Contract Description [Please provide me with as much detail as possible.]*
- 11. Contact Owner (Full contact details if possible.)*
- 12. CPV codes/ProClass*
- 13. Contract Reference*

IMPORTANT

- 1. For those organisation planning to make an exemption, the spend information I have requested is an overall figure and I am not requesting a complete breakdown of services relating to the spend.*
- 2. If the organisation has a CRM system or a similar system there should be a facility to download and extract contract data.*
- 3. You may forward me a Weblink to a portal to download the contract register, please make sure all of the organisation's contracts are provided as doing prior research I have found that most organisations have only uploaded a small portion of all of their contracts.*

Please do not think that this is the only information I require if you could provide me with more information that would be great.

Contract Data/API Contact Details

- 1. Can you also provide me with contact details of the person responsible for the actual contract's register or someone responsible for API? [Name, Job Title, Telephone, Email Address] At the very least provide me with their actual job title.*

	<i>(Meaning of API “a set of functions and procedures that allow the creation of applications which access the features or data of an operating system, application, or other service.”)</i>
Response	The NIO are named participants in multi departmental Collaborative frameworks managed and procured via Central Procurement Delivery (collaboration.cpd@finance-ni.gov.uk) and Crown Commercial Services (info@crowncommercial.gov.uk), who both hold the requested information. I can confirm that we hold LIMITED information on directly procured contracts within the scope of your request, but in this case we will not be providing it to you as it is exempt from disclosure as section 12 is engaged. The law allows us to decline to answer FOI requests when we estimate it would cost us more than £600 (equivalent to 3.5 working days’ worth of work, calculated at £25 per hour) to identify, locate, extract and then provide the information that has been asked for. To comply with the request and to enable us to identify whether we hold any such material, officials would be required to open and read a large amount of records individually across all our information repositories. Although we cannot answer your request at the moment, we might be able to answer a further refined request within the cost limit. You may wish to consider reducing the detail and extent of your headings, requesting only specific information relevant to your interest. Please note that, as in this instance, a further refined request may still not fall within the FOIA cost limit.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/19/104
Month Issued	July 2019
Request	<i>I would like to know the amount the department has spent from January 2016 to date on reprinting materials for public distribution due to spelling mistakes, or factual errors.</i> <i>I would like the information broken down on a month by month basis with the initial amount spent on a product and the subsequent amount to reprint materials, and details of what the item was.</i> <i>Should the scope of this request be too broad please restrict the timeframe?</i>
Response	No costs have been incurred from January 2016 to date in respect of reprinting materials for public distribution due to spelling mistakes, or factual errors.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/19/105
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Month Issued	July 2019
Request	May I request the following under the Freedom of Information Act:
	1. The total mean and median salaries, as well as total average bonuses of all male staff broken down by ethnicity into White, Mixed, Black African, Black Caribbean, South Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan, etc.), East Asian (Chinese and other), Arab, Other (or however your department breaks down ethnic groups).
	2. The total mean and median salaries, as well as total average bonuses of all female staff broken down by ethnicity into White, Mixed, Black African, Black Caribbean, South Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan, etc.), East Asian (Chinese and other), Arab, Other (or however your department breaks down ethnic groups).
	Please see Table A below for guidance on how to present the information. However, if the ethnic breakdown I have provided does not match what you record then please alter the table to accommodate the information that you do have.
	Table A

Response	The Northern Ireland Office is committed to building a diverse and inclusive workforce at all levels; however, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) provides employment services on our behalf. As such, the Department does not hold the information in the requested format. Although we are unable to provide the information in the requested format, you may also wish to note that information on senior staff bonuses and workforce median remuneration is published in the Northern Ireland Office's Annual Report and Accounts. The report for 2018-19 will be published on our website in due course.
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/19/107
Month Issued	July 2019
Request	<i>I'd like to make an FOI request.</i> <i>The information I'm looking for is how much money the Office is currently spending on the training, upskilling and professional development of its civil servants — and who the main providers are.</i> <i>I defer to you on what the easiest way is to cut up the available data, but what I'd like to know is:</i> <i>What is the Office's annual learning and development budget? If you have a more detailed breakdown of how the budget is spent, that'd be helpful. Otherwise, just the overall number is ok.</i> <i>Who are the main recipients of this budget (who are the learning providers)?</i>
Response	In response to your questions the annual learning and development budget for the Northern Ireland Office in 2018/19 was £70,000. The learning providers who are the main recipients of this budget would be Civil Service Learning, Korn Ferry Hay, KPMG and Capita.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/19/108
Month Issued	July 2019
Request	<i>I am interested in the case of Conor Claxton (born in Belfast) and the IRA group known as the Florida Four. I was wondering if you could release information on Claxton and the Florida operation?</i> <i>I would also be interested in information related to Fr. Alec Reid, a priest from Clonard, because of his role as a peace negotiator for both the Northern Irish and the Basques.</i>
Response	We can neither confirm nor deny whether the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) holds the information that you have requested.

	We are not obliged to confirm or deny whether we hold the information you have requested by virtue of Sections 23(5) security matters, 24(2) national security and 27(5) of the Act. The fact sections 23(5), 24(2) and 27(5) of the Act have been cited, should not be taken as an indication that the information you requested is or is not held by the department. The terms of this exemption in the Freedom of Information Act mean that we do not have to consider whether or not it would be in the public interest for us to reveal whether or not the information is held. You can find out more about the exemptions mentioned above by reading https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/section/23 https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/section/24 https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/section/27
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/19/109
Month Issued	July 2019
Request	<i>As I understand it, under the Treasury document 'Managing Public Money' a permanent secretary has the right formally to object to a ministerial decision to spend money.</i> <i>Under the Freedom of Information Act please can you confirm:</i> <i>1. Every instance in which the permanent secretary has objected to a ministerial decision in the last five years?</i> <i>2. Every instance in which a minister/ cabinet secretary has been overruled and had to request written direction from the secretary of state to proceed with spending money in the last five years?</i>
Response	There have been no instances where a permanent secretary has objected to a ministerial decision in the last five years, or in which a minister/ cabinet secretary has been overruled and had to request written direction from the secretary of state to proceed with spending money in the last five years.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/19/110
Month Issued	July 2019
Request	<i>I am writing in regards to Brexit.</i> <i>I am the following information</i>

	1. Please state how much the NIO has spent on preparations for Brexit to date. Please provide a breakdown by the main categories. For guidance, I would like information similar to that provided by the Ministry of Justice: https://www.lawgazette.co.uk/news/ministry-of-justice-reveals-10m-brexit-day-preparations/5070553.article
Response	The Act, specifically Section 12(1), allows us to decline to answer FOI requests when we estimate it would cost us more than £600 (equivalent to 3.5 working days' worth of work, calculated at £25 per hour) to identify, locate, extract and then provide the information that has been asked for. We regret to advise that your request has been declined on these grounds. You can find out more about Section 12(1) by reading the extract from the Act and some guidance points we consider when applying this exemption, attached at the end of this letter. You can also find more information by reading the full text of the Act, available at Cost limits. In order to determine whether the Department holds any records which fall within the scope of the request, officials across the Department would be required to locate, analyse and extract a large number of records. The cost of doing so would engage the cost limits outlined above. Although we cannot answer your request, we might be able to answer a refined request within the cost limit, for example a shorter period of time. However, please note that, as in this instance, a further refined request may still not fall within the FOIA cost limit, or may engage one or more FOIA exemptions.
FOI Request Reference	FOI/19/111
Month Issued	July 2019
Request	<i>Please could you provide me with detail on staff training for IT and digital skills amongst your workforce over the last three financial years?</i> <i>Broken down by financial year</i> <i>Detail on the nature of the course and attendee numbers e.g. 150 staff attended Microsoft excel training onsite, 5 staff attended a cyber-skills webinar, 16 staff took part in data analytics course</i> <i>Associated costs (if available) for these courses</i>

Response	Please find the information below in relation to your request:	
	2018/2019	2 x SharePoint end user training - total cost £1,324 1 x Delivering Digital transformation training 1 x Excel training £65 22 x Intranet editor training £510 82 x Team drive training
	2017/2018	10 x Intranet editor training £720 43 x Content manager training 1 x SharePoint end user training £934
	2016/2017	17 x Google Vault training 24 x Content manager training 2 Days x Google floorwalker support £1590.00 (number of people supported not known)

FOI Request Reference	FOI/19/112
Month Issued	July 2019
Request	<i>Please provide all communications (emails, text messages, WhatsApp messages) regarding the planned drinks event for Stormont talks negotiators on 18 June 2019.</i>
Response	The law allows us to decline to answer FOI requests when we estimate it would cost us more than £600 (equivalent to 3.5 working days' worth of work, calculated at £25 per hour) to identify, locate, extract and then provide the information that has been asked for. To comply with the request and to enable us to identify whether we hold any such material, officials across the entire Department would be required to open and read a large amount of records individually across all our information repositories. You should not infer from this that the Northern Ireland Office holds a large amount of information relating to the subjects you have asked about, only that we would need to search through a large amount of records in order to find out whether we hold any information relevant to your request.

	You can find out more about Section 12(1) by reading the extract from the Act and some guidance points we consider when applying this exemption, attached at the end of this letter. You can also find more information by reading the full text of the Act, available at http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/section/12. Although we cannot answer your request at the moment, we might be able to answer a further refined request within the cost limit. You may wish to consider a timeframe for the request, indicating a specific team within the Department, or perhaps narrow down the type of records to include in the search. The NIO's Annual Report and Accounts includes some information on how the Department is structured, which you may find useful: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nio-annual-report-and-accounts-2017-18. Please note that, as in this instance, a further refined request may still not fall within the FOIA cost limit.
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/19/113
Month Issued	July 2019
Request	<i>I am currently embarking on a research project around Cyber Security and was hoping you could provide me with some contract information relating to following information:</i> <i>1. Standard Firewall (Network) - Firewall service protects your corporate Network from unauthorised access and other Internet security threats</i> <i>2. Anti-virus Software Application - Anti-virus software is a program or set of programs that are designed to prevent, search for, detect, and remove software viruses, and other malicious software like worms, trojans, adware, and more.</i> <i>3. Microsoft Enterprise Agreement - is a volume licensing package offered by Microsoft.</i> <i>The information I require is around the procurement side and we do not require any specifics (serial numbers, models, location) that could bring threat/harm to the organisation.</i> <i>For each of the different types of cyber security services can you please provide me with:</i> <i>1. Who is the existing supplier for this contract?</i> <i>2. What does the organisation annual spend for each of contract?</i> <i>3. What is the description of the services provided for each contract? Please do not just state firewall.</i> <i>4. Primary Brand (ONLY APPLIES TO CONTRACT 1&2)</i> <i>5. What is the expiry date of each contract?</i>

	6. <i>What is the start date of each contract?</i> 7. <i>What is the contract duration of contract?</i> 8. <i>The responsible contract officer for each of the contracts above? Full name, job title, contact number and direct email address.</i> 9. <i>Number of Licenses (ONLY APPLIES TO CONTRACT 3)</i>
Response	In respect of our questions, the Northern Ireland Office receives managed ICT services from IT Assist (ITA), which is a service provided by Enterprise Shared Services, a body within the Department of Finance, Northern Ireland. The information requested is, therefore, not held by this Department. This information may be available from the Department of Finance, Northern Ireland who can be contacted at foi@finance-ni.gov.uk.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/19/114
Month Issued	July 2019
Request	<i>Please can I request under the Freedom of Information Act:</i> <i>An electronic spreadsheet file (e.g. Excel file) containing information about each trip taken within the UK by a minister within your department on official duties, from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.</i> <i>To include in separate columns:</i> <i>Name of minister</i> <i>Full address of destination</i> <i>Postcode of destination</i> <i>Start date of trip</i> <i>End date of trip</i> <i>Purpose of trip</i> <i>Cost of trip (to include transport, meals and accommodation)</i> <i>Whether the minister was accompanied by spouse, family member(s) or friend at public expense (Yes/no. If yes, please provide details)</i> <i>If a minister who served during this time period made no UK trips on ministerial duties, please state their name with the entry 'No trips taken within UK'</i>

	<i>To reiterate: I am aware information is published about ministers' overseas visits. It is visits within the UK that I request information about.</i>
Response	Freedom of information law allows us to decline to answer FOI requests when we estimate it would cost us more than £600 (equivalent to 3.5 working days' worth of work, calculated at £25 per hour) to identify, locate, extract and then provide the information that has been asked for in a request (section 12 FOIA). We have made the decision to decline your request on this basis, as to comply with the request and to enable us to identify whether we hold any such material, officials would be required to open and read a large amount of different records individually stored in a number of locations, and given the broad scope of your request we consider this would cost over £600. The link below will provide you with the Northern Ireland Office's Quarterly Ministerial Transparency Data and may help with your query. https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ni-office-ministerial-transparency-data The decision to decline this request under s12 (1) of the FOI Act has been made because the information requested is not held in as much detail as stated above and the time required to acquire much of it, for the time period requested, would exceed the 3.5 working days' worth of work to identify, locate, extract and amalgamate into the format requested. Although we cannot answer your request at the moment, we might be able to answer a further refined request within the cost limit. You may wish to reconsider the scope of your FOI request and submit a revised and more targeted request by providing a shorter timeframe/date range or more specific types of stakeholders. You should not infer from this that the Northern Ireland Office holds a large amount of information relating to the subjects you have asked about, only that we would need to search through a large number of records in order to find out whether we hold any information relevant to your request. You can find out more about Section 12(1) by reading the extract from the Act and some guidance points we consider when applying this exemption, attached at the end of this letter. You can also find more information by reading the full text of the Act, available at http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/section/12. Please note that, as in this instance, a further refined request may still not fall within the FOIA cost limit.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/19/115
Month Issued	July 2019
Request	<i>For a list of correspondence received by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in May 2019 which considers the issue of abortion in the jurisdiction- simply a title and the name of the sender will suffice.</i> <i>If this is not within the cost limit, could you please advise how to get a request within the limit.</i>
Response	Freedom of information law allows us to decline to answer FOI requests when we estimate it would cost us more than £600 (equivalent to 3.5 working days' worth of work, calculated at £25 per hour) to identify, locate, extract and then provide the information that has been asked for in a request (section 12 FOIA). We have made the decision to decline your request on this basis, as to comply with the request and to enable us to identify whether we hold any such material, officials would be required to open and read a large amount of different records individually stored in a number of locations, and given the broad scope of your request we consider this would cost over £600. The link below will provide you with the Northern Ireland Office's Quarterly Ministerial Transparency Data and may help with your query. https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ni-office-ministerial-transparency-data We should point out that title and the name of the sender would not be released as personal information and would not be disclosed in line with s40 of FOIA. Although we cannot answer your request at the moment, we might be able to answer a further refined request within the cost limit. You may wish to reconsider the scope of your FOI request and submit a revised and more targeted request by providing a shorter timeframe/date range or more specific types of stakeholders. You should not infer from this that the Northern Ireland Office holds a large amount of information relating to the subjects you have asked about, only that we would need to search through a large number of records in order to find out whether we hold any information relevant to your request. You can find out more about Section 12(1) by reading the extract from the Act and some guidance points we consider when applying this exemption, attached at the end of this letter. You can also find more information by reading the full text of the Act, available at http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/section/12.

	Please note that, as in this instance, a further refined request may still not fall within the FOIA cost limit.
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/19/116
Month Issued	July 2019
Request	<i>All correspondence within the NIO that can be found within the cost limit that relates to the Infected Blood Inquiry or Infected Blood Support Schemes during the period 1st Mar 2019 - 23rd Jun 2019.</i>
Response	The Northern Ireland Office has looked through archives for the periods you cited. After a search of our records, we have identified material within the scope of your request. This is attached. Please note that certain personal data has been redacted in line with section 40 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. We are not obliged to provide information if it relates to the formulation of government policy. In this case, the information is exempt under section 35(1) (a) of the FOIA. Section 35(1) (a) protects information relating to the formulation or development of government policy. We have considered the public interest in disclosing this information. <u>Public interest considerations in favour of disclosure:</u> While there is a public interest in the way in which government decisions are made, and how relationships with other stakeholders are conducted, good government depends on good decision-making. This needs to be based on the best advice available and a full consideration of all the options without fear of premature disclosure of matters that are subject to the ongoing formulation of government policy. <u>Public interest considerations against disclosure:</u> Ministers and officials also need to be able to conduct rigorous and candid risk assessments of their policies and programmes including considerations of the pros and cons without there being premature disclosure which might close off better options. There needs to be a free space in which it is possible to “think the unthinkable” and use imagination, without the fear that policy proposals will be held up to ridicule from premature disclosure. After careful consideration we have concluded that s 35(a) is engaged and it is in the public interest to withhold the documents.

	If you require further guidance on S.35 please refer to the guidance at the end of this letter and the ICO guidance on 'section 35' at Formulation of government policy .
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/19/117
Month Issued	July 2019
Request	<i>I am writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request the following information:</i> <i>1. What are your internal Cyber Security practices for your Cabinet Minister(s), and ministers in general?</i> <i>2. What cybersecurity training is provided to both Cabinet and non-Cabinet Ministers?</i> <i>3. What steps are taken to ensure that Ministers are compliant with their training?</i> <i>4. When was the training introduced?</i> <i>5. Who has failed to the training, why and when?</i> <i>Please provide me with this information from 2010 to 25/6/19</i>
Response	Ministers in this department are briefed on cyber security awareness. However, we do not hold any information in scope of your remaining questions.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/19/118
Month Issued	July 2019
Request	<i>Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 I seek the following information:</i> <i>1. The number of non-disclosure agreements made for each of the financial years 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19</i> <i>2. For each year, the total expenditure on settlements including non-disclosure agreements</i>
Response	I can advise that no non-disclosure agreements were signed in each of the financial years, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19. In respect of 2014-15 we are not obliged, under section 40(2) of the Act, to provide information that is the personal information of another person if releasing would contravene any of the provisions in the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA). In this instance we believe that the release of this information would contravene the first data protection principle and therefore section 40 (2) is engaged. The terms of this exemption in the Freedom of Information Act mean that we do not have to consider whether or not it would be in the public interest for you to have the information.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/19/119
Month Issued	July 2019
Request	<i>In January 2017 the Irish Government released information on WhatsApp groups established to coordinate a response to the British Leave verdict in June 2016.</i> <i>Could you please tell me if your department set up any similar online or messaging group chats, how long they ran for and provide me a transcript of the messages?</i>
Response	Freedom of information law allows us to decline to answer FOI requests when we estimate it would cost us more than £600 (equivalent to 3.5 working days' worth of work, calculated at £25 per hour) to identify, locate, extract and then provide the information that has been asked for in a request (section 12 FOIA). We have made the decision to decline your request on this basis, as to comply with the request and to enable us to identify whether we hold any such material, officials would be required to open and read a large amount of different records individually stored in a number of locations, and given the broad scope of your request we consider this would cost over £600. You should not infer from this that the Northern Ireland Office holds a large amount of information relating to the subjects you have asked about, only that we would need to search through a large number of records in order to find out whether we hold any information relevant to your request. You can find out more about Section 12(1) by reading the extract from the Act and some guidance points we consider when applying this exemption, attached at the end of this letter. You can also find more information by reading the full text of the Act, available at Cost limits. Although we cannot answer your request at the moment, we might be able to answer a refined request within the cost limit. You may wish to consider focusing your request on a narrower range of issues and/or on records produced during a more focussed set of dates. Please note that, as in this instance, a further refined request may still not fall within the FOIA cost limit. <u>ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT SECTION 12(1)</u> We have provided below additional information about Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act. We have included some extracts from the legislation, as well as some of the guidance we use when applying it. We hope you find this information useful.

The legislation

Section 1: Right of Access to information held by public authorities

- (1) Any person making a request for information to a public authority is entitled—
- (a) to be informed in writing by the public authority whether it holds information of the description specified in the request, and
 - (b) if that is the case, to have that information communicated to him.

Section 12: Cost of compliance exceeds appropriate limit

- (1) Section 1(1) does not oblige a public authority to comply with a request for information if the authority estimates that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the appropriate limit.
- (2) Subsection (1) does not exempt the public authority from its obligation to comply with paragraph (a) of section 1(1) unless the estimated cost of complying with that paragraph alone would exceed the appropriate limit.
- (3) In subsections (1) and (2) “the appropriate limit” means such amount as may be prescribed, and different amounts may be prescribed in relation to different cases.
- (4) The Secretary of State may by regulations provide that, in such circumstances as may be prescribed, where two or more requests for information are made to a public authority—
- 1) by one person, or
 - 2) by different persons who appear to the public authority to be acting in concert or in pursuance of a campaign, the estimated cost of complying with any of the requests is to be taken to be the estimated total cost of complying with all of them.
- (5) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision for the purposes of this section as to the costs to be estimated and as to the manner in which they are to be estimated.

Guidance

The appropriate limit

The 'appropriate limit', for the purposes of section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act has been set at:

- £600 for central government and Parliament.
- The hourly rate is set at £25 per person per hour.

	The following activities may be taken into account when public authorities are estimating whether the appropriate limit has been exceeded. • determining whether it holds the information requested • locating the information or documents containing the information • retrieving such information or documents • extracting the information from the document containing it.
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