

JULY 2020 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION RESPONSES

Year	Month	FOI Reference	Topic
2020	Jul	FOI/20/096	Secondments
2020	Jul	FOI/20/097	IT contracts
2020	Jul	FOI/20/098	Covid-19 response: resourcing
2020	Jul	FOI/20/099	Staff appointments and promotions: internal guidance
2020	Jul	FOI/20/100	Abortion legislation in Northern Ireland: equality impact assessment
2020	Jul	FOI/20/102	Ministerial appearances on Good Morning Britain
2020	Jul	FOI/20/103	Intranet articles: Universal Credit, Asylum Seekers and Black Lives Matter
2020	Jul	FOI/20/104	Correspondence with Jackson Carlaw MSP
2020	Jul	FOI/20/105	ICT internal plans and strategy documentation
2020	Jul	FOI/20/106	Intranet contract
2020	Jul	FOI/20/107	Historical institutional abuse and child migrants
2020	Jul	FOI/20/108	Staff sick leave: mental health related illnesses
2020	Jul	FOI/20/114	Advancement of LGBTI rights in Northern Ireland

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/096
Month Issued	July 2020
Request	<i>This is a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act. Please provide the following information (please note this request comes in several parts):</i> 1. <i>Since 1st January 2018 to the current day, please indicate the number of secondees that have been received by the department from the following organisations: Deloitte, Ernst & Young, KPMG and PricewaterhouseCoopers. For each secondment, please provide the following information:</i> • <i>The name of the organisation where the secondee came from (either Deloitte, Ernst & Young, KPMG or PricewaterhouseCoopers)</i> • <i>The date and duration of the secondment at this department</i> • <i>Where the secondee was assigned to within the department</i> • <i>Please provide a description of their role at the department, as well as their responsibilities</i> 2. <i>Since 1st January 2018 to the current day, please indicate the number of civil servants from this department that have been seconded to the following organisations: Deloitte, Ernst & Young, KPMG and PricewaterhouseCoopers. For each secondment, please provide the following information:</i> • <i>The name of the organisation that the civil servant was seconded to (either Deloitte, Ernst & Young, KPMG or PricewaterhouseCoopers)</i> • <i>The date and duration of the secondment (at either Deloitte, Ernst & Young, KPMG or PricewaterhouseCoopers)</i> • <i>Which department within those four organisations that the secondee was assigned to</i> • <i>Please provide a description of their role at those four organisations, as well as their responsibilities</i>
Response	In response to your questions no individuals from Deloitte, Ernst & Young, KPMG or PricewaterhouseCoopers have been seconded into the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) and no civil servants from the NIO have been seconded to those organisations since 1 January 2018 to the current day.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/097
Month Issued	July 2020
Request	<i>Can I please request you send me back the below questions answered when you have sufficient time,</i>

	1. <i>What reseller do you prefer to buy your Software through?</i> 2. <i>Are there any favoured frameworks you tend to use?</i> 3. <i>Who is the decision-maker for IT Purchasing?</i> 4. <i>Who is your mobile phone provider?</i> 5. <i>What Mobile Device Management Solution are you using and when is the renewal date?</i> 6. <i>What Mobile Threat Detection do you have in place for mobile devices and when is the renewal date?</i> 7. <i>What Virtual Desktop Software do you have in place for remote workers and when is the renewal date?</i> 8. <i>Do you currently use a document security or digital rights management tool and when is the renewal date?</i> 9. <i>What are you using for instant messaging?</i> 10. <i>Who do you currently use for your Annual IT health checks and when is your next one due?</i> 11. <i>What email exchange server are you running? Cloud or on-premise?</i> 12. <i>What antivirus software/tool do you use and when is the renewal date?</i> 13. <i>Do you have an incident response team within your IT department?</i>
Response	In response to questions 1, 2, 3, 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. In response to question 4 the Department's mobile phone suppliers are Vodafone and EE. In response to question 9 the Department's instant messaging is provided by Google Hangouts/Chat. In response to question 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13 the Northern Ireland Office can neither confirm nor deny that it holds the information you requested as the duty in section 1(1)(a) of the FOI Act does not apply, by virtue of both section 24(2) that relates to national security and sections 31(1)(a) and 31(3)(a) that relates to law enforcement and the prevention of crime. However, this should not be taken as conclusive evidence that the information you have requested exists or does not exist. Section 24 is a qualified exemption and so we have considered whether it would be in the public interest for us to confirm or deny whether we hold the information. In this case, we have concluded that the public interest favours neither confirming nor denying whether the requested information is held. Section 31 is a prejudice based exemption and is subject to the public interest test. With regard to your request, we recognise the public interest in knowing whether the government holds particular information. Balanced against this, is the public

	interest in not releasing information that would aid a criminal intent on launching cyber-attacks on the Department's IT systems. In this case we consider that the wider public interest lies in neither confirming nor denying that information, which may have been disclosed in an unauthorised manner, is held.
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/098
Month Issued	July 2020
Request	<i>I am writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request the following information from the Northern Ireland Office:</i> <i>Please tell me the number of civil servants in the Northern Ireland Office who were temporarily diverted from preparations for the end of the transition period to assist Covid-19 efforts.</i> <i>Please tell me the number of those civil servants who have since returned to their usual responsibilities, from the 17th June 2020.</i> <i>Please provide these figures in both full-time-equivalent and total headcount forms.</i>
Response	The number of civil servants in the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) who were temporarily diverted from preparations for the end of the transition period to assist Covid-19 efforts was 11 members of staff. This figure relates to both full-time equivalent and total headcount. As there are fewer than 5 members of staff who have since returned to their usual roles from 17th June, 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/20/099
Month Issued	July 2020
Request	<i>Please could you provide me with a copy of your Department's internal guidance for appointments and promotions?</i> <i>I am specifically seek the guidance that regulates the conduct of cross-Government recruitment campaigns (i.e. not External campaigns, which are regulated by the Civil Service Commission).</i>

	<i>I understand some Departments have this stored on their intranet web pages. If so, I am happy for the contents to be copied-and-pasted into a word document (or similar).</i>
Response	The Northern Ireland Office follows the terms and conditions of the Ministry of Justice. Please see the attached MoJ Resourcing Policy which the NIO applies in their recruitment campaigns.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/100
Month Issued	July 2020
Request	<i>Under the Freedom of Information Act please provide me with the following information.</i> <i>1. Details of Equality Impact Assessment carried out in respect of the implementation of Abortion Legislation in Northern Ireland from the date of the initial legislation in the House of Commons on 22 October 2019 until the legal implementation of abortion on 31 March 2020. What were its terms of reference?</i> <i>2. The House of Commons voted to reject the view that the above legislation was contrary to the requirements of the Northern Ireland Act. Please provide any documentation to or from the NIO which considered the notion that the Abortion legislation may have been contrary to the requirements of the Northern Ireland Act. The relevant dates for this point are from 22 October 2019 to date.</i> <i>3. Please also provide as in point 2 any correspondence between the NIO and DHSS which considered possible adverse impact in relation to the Abortion legislation. The same dates as in point 2 apply.</i> <i>4. If an adverse equality impact was not carried out please provide copies of any correspondence which justified this omission. The same dates apply as in point 2.</i> <i>5. Please provide copies of any correspondence from senior officials in the DHSS explaining and justifying the decisions taken following the public consultation. The appropriate dates are from the closing dates of the public consultation to date.</i> <i>6. Can the NIO advise if a majority vote in the House of Commons Parliament surpasses the requirements of Domestic Law? Please provide any policy papers the NIO possess regarding this issue. The same dates as in Point 2 apply.</i> <i>7. Was it considered in any EQIA that the new Abortion legislation may run contrary to any other Northern Ireland Domestic Law? Same dates as in Point 2 apply.</i> <i>8. Was legal advice sought from Departmental Solicitors or any other Departmental Advisers and if so was Department satisfied that the new law stood up to all appropriate tests?</i> <i>9. Please also provide copies of documentation that considered the feedback from public consultation in respect of the Regulatory Framework for the administration of abortion services and the decision making process that resulted in proceeding with legislation as it now stands. Same dates apply as in Point 2.</i> <i>10. Please provide any correspondence between senior members of both NIO and the DHSS regarding the legitimacy of the new Abortion Law in Northern Ireland. Same dates as in Point 2 apply.</i>

Response	Your request for recorded information has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), and some of your questions have been treated and responded to as Official correspondence where the Department does not hold the information. Matters dealt with under the FOIA In relation to point 3 above, the Department does not hold this information. In relation to the information held by the Department for points 5 and 9 above, the department holds information on these matters. However, the information sought is exempt under section 35 (formulation of government policy) of the FOI Act and the public interest test weighs against disclosure of the information. This is on the basis that 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, and 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. Ministers and officials also need to be able to conduct rigorous and candid risk assessments of their policies and legislative reform including considerations of the pros and cons without there being premature disclosure which might close off better options. After careful consideration we have concluded that s35(a) is engaged in this case and it is in the public interest to withhold the relevant documentation. If you require further guidance on S.35 please see attached ICO guidance on section 35 of the FOI Act at https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/2260003/section-35-government-policy.pdf In response to your question at point 8), the Department holds this information. However, any information held by the Department on this matter is exempt under section 42 (legal professional privilege) of the FOI Act. While we recognise that there is a general public interest in disclosure of information and in understanding the legal justification for decisions taken by government, against this there is a strong public interest in protecting the confidentiality of communications between lawyers and their clients. This confidentiality promotes respect for the rule of law by encouraging clients to seek legal advice and allowing for full and frank exchanges between clients and their lawyers. It is particularly important for the Government to seek legal advice in relation to sensitive and difficult decisions, and for any advice given to be fully informed and fully reasoned. Without confidentiality, clients might fear that anything they say to their lawyers, however sensitive or potentially damaging, could be revealed later, and they might be deterred from seeking legal advice at all, or from disclosing all relevant material to their lawyers, or the advice given may not be as full and frank as it ought to be. Taking into account all the circumstances of this case, we have determined that the balance of the public interest favours withholding the relevant information in this context.
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Your questions below are being treated as official correspondence as they are not requests for recorded information. I can confirm that the Department does not hold any information in relation to these matters.

Matters responded to as Official correspondence

In relation to the points you have asked about under 1, 4 and 7 above, a screening form under section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 was completed on the policy proposals that went out for public consultation in November 2019 and published on [nio.gov.uk](https://www.nio.gov.uk). As the Government response to the consultation notes, we carefully analysed all of the consultation submissions and comments on our initial screening and outlined options for mitigation as regards any differential impact on any of the section 75 categories of person. On the basis of the additional evidence gathered and the options for mitigation, we do not consider an Equality Impact Assessment is necessary. The screening form and Government response to the public consultation can be accessed here

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/a-new-legal-framework-for-abortion-services-in-northern-ireland>

In response to your questions 2, 6 and 10 above, the Government was placed under a clear legal duty under section 9 of the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc) Act 2019 (NIEF Act) to make regulations that provide lawful access to abortion services in Northern Ireland by 31 March 2020, consistent with the recommendations of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women report, Inquiry concerning the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland under article 8 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Report). It is the Government's view that the new abortion framework for Northern Ireland provides a balanced and appropriate way to deliver on the legal requirements under section 9 of the NIEF Act and compliance with the recommendations of the CEDAW Report and other relevant legal obligations. The Regulations have now been debated and approved by both Houses of the UK Parliament, as required, and therefore remain in force as the law on access to abortion services in Northern Ireland. This means that since 31 March 2020, when the initial Regulations came into force, abortion services in Northern Ireland must be provided in a way that is consistent with the legal parameters set out in the Regulations.

For further explanation of the way in which the Regulations were drafted, and an overview of the feedback received through the consultation process, you can consult the UK Government consultation response, which has been published on gov.uk and is available here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/875380/FINAL_Government_response_-_Northern_Ireland_abortion_framework.pdf

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/102
Month Issued	July 2020

Request	FOI REQUEST FOR ALL COMMUNICATIONS REGARDING GOOD MORNING BRITAIN MEDIA APPEARANCE REQUESTS TO MINISTERS TO APPEAR ON THE PROGRAMME. <i>As I have been directed to each individual Department, I hereby submit a Freedom of Information request to your Department for the information as below</i> <i>Given the report of alleged boycotting by Government Ministers to appear on Good Morning Britain which is self-evident by the fact that Ministers have not appeared on the show for the last 56 days whilst appearing on other television and media shows, I request for all communications held by Government regarding this.</i> <i>This information should include communications from Government Director of Communications and Press Office, any media advisors to ministers and the subsequent replies from your Department / Private Office to Downing Street as well as any information concerning this strategy to the Minister of your Department and any briefings regarding whether legal advice was sought as to the legality of the Government possibly been seen to not being open and equitable to all media outlets.</i>
Response	We have conducted a thorough search of our records and I can confirm that the Northern Ireland Office does not hold any information within the scope of your request.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/103
Month Issued	July 2020
Request	<i>Under the Freedom of Information, I request:</i> <i>All articles on your departmental intranet system from 1st January 2020 relating to Universal Credit, Asylum Seekers and Black Lives Matter.</i> <i>In addition, I also request all comments in the comments section relating to said articles.</i>
Response	We have conducted a thorough search of our records and found the attached intranet article with relation to Black Lives Matter, which was posted on the 8 June 2020. We are not obliged, under section 40(2) of the Act, to provide information that is the personal information of another person if releasing it would contravene any of the Data Protection Principles under 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. The department had nil returns for any intranet posts within scope for Universal Credit and Asylum Seekers.
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/104
Month Issued	July 2020
Request	<i>Under the Freedom of Information Act, I request:</i> <i>All correspondence, letters and meeting requests received by Ministers and Secretaries of State in your department from Jackson Carlaw MSP from 14th February 2020 to present.</i>
Response	We have conducted a search of our records and can confirm that the Northern Ireland Office does not hold any information within the scope of your request.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/105
Month Issued	July 2020
Request	<i>I wish to submit a request for some of the organisation's information around the internal plans and strategy documents around ICT.</i> <i>The ICT documents I require is the most recent update.</i> <i>I wish to obtain the following documents:</i> <i>1. ICT/IM&T/IS Strategy - The IT department strategy or plans, highlights their current and future objectives.</i> <i>2. ICT Org Chart- A visual document that presents the structure of the IT department, please include name and job titles. If this cannot be sent, please work towards a structure with job titles.</i> <i>3. ICT Annual or Business Plan- Like the ICT strategy but is more annually focused.</i> <i>4. ICT Capital Programme/budget- A document that shows financials budget on current and future projects.</i> <i>If some of these documents are not valid, please state when the 2020 ICT documents are planned to be published.</i>
Response	In response to questions 1, 2, 3, and 4 the Northern Ireland Office does not have an IT Department and 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. Long term capital projects outside the scope of their support are dealt with on a case by case basis.
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/106
Month Issued	July 2020
Request	<i>I am writing to make a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.</i> <i>Please could you provide the following information:</i> <i>1. How many people are employed by your organisation, including full time and part time?</i> <i>2. What is your current intranet solution? (SharePoint, WordPress, Invotra, etc)</i> <i>3. How long have you been using this intranet solution?</i> <i>4. When is your intranet contract up for renewal?</i> <i>5. What is your annual intranet budget?</i> <i>6. Do you share an intranet/IT services with other organisations, if so who?</i> <i>7. Which team and/or individual(s) are responsible for managing your intranet internally?</i> <i>8. Are you using the Office 365 suite? If so, which applications from the suite are in use?</i> <i>9. Which team and/or individual(s) are responsible for your intranet's procurement within the organisation?</i> <i>10. Is your Active Directory hosted on-premise, or in the cloud?</i> <i>11. Could you provide us with a link to your Digital Workplace Strategy?</i>
Response	In response to question 1 the Northern Ireland Office employs 10 part-time and 191 full time staff. In response to question 2 the Northern Ireland Office uses WordPress as its intranet solution. In response to questions 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 11, 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. In response to question 5, the annual intranet budget is £7,800. In response to question 8, the Northern Ireland Office does not use the Office 365 suite.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/107
Month Issued	July 2020
Request	<i>Under FOI, I request copies of the following:</i> <i>Papers, briefings, minutes of the Executive Committee, TEO, Executive Leadership Team, Northern Ireland Civil Service and others, in regard to the appointment and approval of Brendan McAllister as Interim Advocate, including discussions and communication to/from/with members of parliament at Northern Ireland Assembly and UK Government .</i> <i>All correspondence regarding criterium and skills which were proposed for the position of Interim Advocate and if other candidates were considered in or out of NICS.</i> <i>The approach to storage, retention, and disposal of all documents collected in relation to the victims and survivors of abuse in Institutions and Child Migrants as identified in the HIAI report.</i> <i>Regarding training of staff including IA around safe and secure storage and the operation of IT applications. Including storage, if any off site in a secure and safe manner. Who or which office had/has ultimate control of documents if this is operational?</i> <i>What papers ,briefings, minutes in regard to Child Migrants living in Australia, correspondence with Child Migrant Trust and Tuart Place (Perth) regarding role in providing and sharing information about child migrants and their maintaining of safe storage, the retention and disposal of information shared.</i> <i>What steps prior and ongoing are in place for the safe and secure operation and functioning of the Interim Advocates Office, for the purpose of maintaining a database about those wishing to be included on data base and regarding correspondence with IAO?</i> <i>What guarantee was issued from FM, DFM, SOS, Executive Committee, TEO, Executive Leadership Team, NICS , members of Assembly to victims and survivors corresponding with IAO and other entities that their privacy would always be maintained; Including sharing of information between committees and others including details of any associated software applications in doing so.</i>
Response	The Northern Ireland Office has looked through archives for the material you requested. After a search of our records, we have identified material within the scope of your request.

	Some of the information requested is exempt under Section 21 (Information reasonably accessible to the applicant by other means). The information is available on the following links the Interim Advocate remit and Brendan McAllister's background. 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><i>Public interest considerations in favour of disclosure:</i></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><i>Public interest considerations against disclosure:</i></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 s35(a) is engaged and it is in the public interest to withhold some of 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 https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/2260003/section-35-government-policy.pdf
FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/108
Month Issued	July 2020
Request	<i>I am writing to make an open government request for all the information to which I am entitled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.</i> <i>Please send me details of:</i>

	- How many staff sick days have been related to mental health, broken down by month, between 1st January 2020 to 1st July 2020 in your department? - What was the number of total staff working for the department during the above period broken down by month?																					
Response	In response to your questions, please see the table below which gives the information requested: <table><tr><th>Month</th><th>Working Days lost due to Mental Ill Health</th><th>Total number of staff working for the NIO</th></tr><tr><td>January</td><td>23</td><td>194</td></tr><tr><td>February</td><td>12</td><td>199</td></tr><tr><td>March</td><td>0</td><td>202</td></tr><tr><td>April</td><td>0</td><td>198</td></tr><tr><td>May</td><td>0</td><td>201</td></tr><tr><td>June</td><td>0</td><td>202</td></tr></table> Staff in the NIO can avail of a full range of Mental Health support, such as Occupational Health or through reasonable adjustments being made. Recognising staff wellbeing is an ongoing priority within the department; employees are encouraged to speak up if they feel under stress and staff have access to confidential support through the Employee Assistance Programme, as well as support from Mental Health First Aiders. The NIO has a Staff Wellbeing Guide through which staff can be signposted to other sources of support and a number of Resilience training events have been arranged helping staff with stress awareness management.	Month	Working Days lost due to Mental Ill Health	Total number of staff working for the NIO	January	23	194	February	12	199	March	0	202	April	0	198	May	0	201	June	0	202
Month	Working Days lost due to Mental Ill Health	Total number of staff working for the NIO																				
January	23	194																				
February	12	199																				
March	0	202																				
April	0	198																				
May	0	201																				
June	0	202																				
FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/114																					
Month Issued	July 2020																					
Request	I wish to make a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 on the following: - How much has been spent by the Northern Ireland Office in advancing LGBTQ rights in Northern Ireland in the last year? - How much has been spent by the Northern Ireland Office in advancing LGBTQ rights in Northern Ireland in the last five years (broken down by consecutive year)? - Of the budget spent by the Northern Ireland Office in advancing LGBTQ rights in Northern Ireland in the last year, what was it spent on?																					

	• <i>Of the budget spent by the Northern Ireland Office in advancing LGBTQ rights in Northern Ireland in the last five years (broken down by consecutive year), what was it spent on?</i>
Response	In response to your questions, in the last year the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) has spent £2,500 on advancing LGBTQ rights in Northern Ireland and in the last five years the total spend has been £2,818. In 2018, the budget spend was £318 to purchase rainbow lanyards for optional use for our staff in Belfast and London, to support our LGBTQ colleagues, raising awareness in the workplace. In 2019 the budget spend was £2,500 on membership of the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme, covering the NIO budget spend on advancing LGBTQ rights in Northern Ireland, over the last five years. The department is committed to advancing LGBTQ rights where it can, both within the workplace and more generally. The department and Northern Ireland Office ministers have met with several LGBTQ stakeholders, since 2017 and have welcomed hearing a range of views on these important issues. The NIO has an active Diversity & Inclusion network and is wholly committed to advancing equality, diversity and inclusion for all. In 2018 the department won the award for Best (Small) Employer for Equality & Diversity in N Ireland at the Legal-Island Gala Awards and in 2019 we were Highly Commended at the same awards for our gender initiative. We have a Diversity & Inclusion Advocate for LGBTQ and promote events run by the Northern Ireland Civil Service for our Belfast based staff. We have published internal staff blogs on LGBTQ issues, including Pride, where the department has been proud to fly the rainbow flag above Stormont House in Belfast, to mark the occasion. Much of the work we do around advancing LGBTQ rights in the workplace is done without incurring cost.