

SEPTEMBER 2020 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION RESPONSES

Year	Month	FOI Reference	Topic
2020	Sep	FOI/20/113	FOI round robin list: reporting criteria
2020	Sep	FOI/20/126	Contract procurement: supplier exclusions
2020	Sep	FOI/20/127	Staff bonus payments
2020	Sep	FOI/20/128	Racial discrimination complaints
2020	Sep	FOI/20/129	Executive committee (Functions) Bill
2020	Sep	FOI/20/130	Ministerial meetings
2020	Sep	FOI/20/131	Northern Ireland Abortion Scheme Oversight Group
2020	Sep	FOI/20/132	Spending on ministerial office renovations
2020	Sep	FOI/20/133	Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007: road closure order
2020	Sep	FOI/20/134	Losses and special payments
2020	Sep	FOI/20/135	Privilege days
2020	Sep	FOI/20/136	Spending on light bulbs
2020	Sep	FOI/20/138	Spending on speaking clock telephone calls
2020	Sep	FOI/20/139	Covid-19 pandemic: face coverings in retail settings
2020	Sep	FOI/20/140	Usage of algorithms and artificial intelligence software
2020	Sep	FOI/20/141	Public First contracts
2020	Sep	FOI/20/143	Identity verification processes
2020	Sep	FOI/20/144	Spending on consultancy services and agency staff
2020	Sep	FOI/20/145	Losses and special payments
2020	Sep	FOI/20/146	Faculty Science contracts
2020	Sep	FOI/20/147	Office attendance
2020	Sep	FOI/20/148	Faculty, Public First and Topham Guerin contracts
2020	Sep	FOI/20/149	Security vetting times for external candidates
2020	Sep	FOI/20/150	Open source technology

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/113
Month Issued	September 2020
Request	<i>I understand that the FOI round robin list is issued daily to Whitehall departments, and that it comprises of FOI requests across departments that either (a) are identical requests that have been sent to multiple departments or (b) are asking about sensitive subjects that have been reported to the Cabinet Office Clearing House. Once a request is added to the list, other government departments who receive the same request also notify Clearing House.</i> <i>In light of this, I would like to request the following information:</i> <i>1. What criteria does the department use - or refer to - when it flags requests to the round robin list? Please provide a copy of the criteria, or guidelines.</i> <i>2. What criteria does the department use - or refer to - when it flags requests to the Cabinet Office Clearing House? Please provide a copy of the criteria, or guidelines.</i> <i>3. Does the department have a list of sensitive subjects which prompt requests being flagged to the Cabinet Office Clearing House? Please disclose it if it exists.</i> <i>4. For the past two weeks, please provide a copy of all requests that have been sent to the Cabinet Office Clearing House by this department (please redact requesters' names).</i> <i>5. For the past two weeks, please provide a copy of round robin lists received by the department (please redact requesters' names).</i> <i>I would like to remind the department that in Decision Notice FS50841228, the ICO ruled that the Cabinet Office had to release past round robin lists.</i>
Response	We can confirm that some the information requested is held by the Northern Ireland Office and we are able to provide you with some of this information. Regarding parts 1-3 of your request, we do not hold any information within scope of this request. Regarding parts 4 and 5 of your request, we have attached a list that covers the period requested. Some information you have requested is being withheld because it is exempt under section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 40(2) exempts personal information from disclosure if that information relates to someone other than the applicant, and if disclosure of that information would, amongst other things, contravene one of the data protection principles set out in Article 5 of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). In this case, I believe disclosure would

	contravene data protection principle (a), which provides that personal data must be processed fairly and lawfully. Section 40(2) is an absolute exemption and the Northern Ireland Office is not obliged to consider whether the public interest favours disclosing the information. We have withheld the advice in the round robin lists as this is exempt from disclosure under section 36(2)(b)(i)(ii)(c) of the FOI Act, which relates to the prejudice of the effective conduct of public affairs. Section 36 (2)(b)(i)(ii)(c) of the Act provides that information is exempt information if, in the opinion of a qualified person, its disclosure would, or would be likely to, inhibit the free and frank provision of advice or the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation or would otherwise prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs. There is a public interest in the way in which government decisions are made and how relationships with other stakeholders are conducted. Disclosure would help the public to appreciate the considerations surrounding discussions, and the context in which departments operate. There is also a public interest in how decisions are made, at what level, and the reasons behind these decisions so that government officials can be more accountable for their decisions and responsibilities. This information was provided with a reasonable expectation that it would not be released into the public domain. The advice was provided to ensure departments process FOI requests in accordance with legislation. Disclosure would, or would be likely to, inhibit the free and frank provision of advice or the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation or would otherwise prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs. Further information in respect of section 36 can be found at the following link: ICO lo Prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs (section 36)
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/126
Month Issued	September 2020
Request	<i>Procurement Policy Note 06/13 (PPN 06/13) allows for contracting departments to exclude suppliers based on tax compliance. The policy applies to all central government contracts over £5 million, and suppliers bidding for these government contracts must self-certify their tax compliance. The policy note states:</i> <i>Where a supplier declares that it has had an Occasion Of Non Compliance ("OONC"), the contracting department can, at its discretion, decide whether or not to exclude that supplier from the procurement process.</i>

	<i>I would be extremely grateful if you could provide me with the following information:</i> <i>1. How many times between its introduction in April 2013 and August 2020, has Northern Ireland Office used its discretion to exclude a supplier from the procurement of contracts under PPN 06/13?</i> <i>2. Between April 2013 and August 2020, how many suppliers have self-declared to Northern Ireland Office that they have had an Occasion Of Non Compliance</i> <i>I am making this request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.</i>
Response	The Northern Ireland Office are named participants in multi departmental Collaborative frameworks/contracts managed and procured via Construction and Procurement Delivery (collaboration.cpd@finance-ni.gov.uk) and Crown Commercial Services (info@crowncommercial.gov.uk) and any high value NIO contracts are procured through eTenders on our behalf by Construction and Procurement Delivery. The Northern Ireland Office would not therefore be aware of suppliers being excluded under due to tax compliance issues.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/127
Month Issued	September 2020
Request	<i>Please could you provide a total figure for bonus payments for the department in the financial year 2019/20 and specify the highest bonus amount paid.</i>
Response	During the financial year 2019/20 the NIO paid out a total of £98,065 in bonus payments to delegated grades (AA to G6 equivalent). The highest amount paid out was £1000. In respect of SCS bonus payments, the information you have requested is being withheld as it is exempt under section 22(1) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 22(1) protects information intended for future publication. Section 22 is a qualified exemption and I have considered whether the balance of the public interest favours maintaining the exemption in section 22(1) or disclosing the information. You may be interested to know that this information is due to be published in the Northern Ireland Office Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20, and should be available at the following web address: https://www.gov.uk/corporate-information#transparency in due course.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/128
Month Issued	September 2020

Request	<i>I am looking for information about complaints about racial discrimination made by staff. Please could you provide me with the following:</i> <i>1. How many civil servants have made complaints that they suffered racial discrimination by other members of staff in the department in the last three calendar years (up to and including August 2020)? To be clear, I am asking for information for the calendar years of 2018, 2019 and 2020 to date. Please could you break this information down by calendar year and gender? If possible, without identifying the complainant, I would be grateful if you could provide a broad summary of the complaints.</i> <i>2. How many members of staff have faced civil service disciplinary investigations as a result of a complaint/accusation of racial discrimination made against them in the last three calendar years (up to and including August 2020)? Please could you break this information down by calendar year, gender? In each case, please could you state whether any misconduct was found and, if so, what type of disciplinary action was taken including verbal/written/final warnings, suspension, dismissal etc. If possible, without identifying the complainant, I would be grateful if you could provide a broad summary of the complaints.</i> <i>To clarify, with reference to the FOI request I have just submitted concerning racial discrimination complaints, in the second part of the request I am asking for information about how many members of staff have faced civil service disciplinary investigations as a result of a complaint/accusation of racial discrimination made against them "by another member of staff".</i> <i>Please could you provide this information for the last three calendar years (up to and including August 2020)? Please could you break this information down by calendar year, gender? In each case, please could you state whether any misconduct was found and, if so, what type of disciplinary action was taken including verbal/written/final warnings, suspension, dismissal etc. If possible, without identifying the complainant, I would be grateful if you could provide a broad summary of the complaints.</i> <i>Please note, if you are unable to provide a breakdown of the gender of those who have made complaints, or a broad summary of the complaints, within the time limits of the FOI Act, I would be grateful if you proceed with the request without doing so.</i>
Response	In response to Q1 and Q2, the NIO has no records of any complaints in respect of racial discrimination in the department in the last three calendar years up to and including August 2020 and therefore there have been no disciplinary proceedings.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/129
Month Issued	September 2020

Request	<i>Under the Environmental Information Regulations, please provide me with a copy of all material held by the NIO on the Executive Committee (Functions) Bill, or discussions about that legislation prior to it being drafted.</i> <i>I made the request under EIR because this bill has significant environmental impacts - particularly in relation to planning, but also in other areas. Therefore, the bill is intrinsically linked to the environment and I do not believe that issue can be disaggregated from the bill as a whole.</i> <i>I am surprised that you think there may be so much material that this request would be cast too wide - this legislation was not NIO legislation, but Executive legislation.</i> <i>My understanding was that the NIO was consulted about it, but I did not believe that would involve a great deal of material.</i> <i>If there is a large volume of material which would bring this request above the cost limit, please send me a list of that material and from that I can select what is relevant.</i>
Response	We have considered the request and given its content our assessment is this should be treated as a Freedom of Information request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). Information you have requested is exempt under section 35(1) (a) and (b) of the Freedom of Information Act, which protects the formulation of policy and communications between Ministers. Disclosure would weaken Ministers' ability to discuss controversial and sensitive topics free from premature public scrutiny. Section 35 is a qualified exemption and I have considered whether the balance of the public interest favours our release of this material. There is a general public interest in disclosure of information and I recognise that openness in government may increase public trust in and engagement with the government. I recognise that the decisions Ministers make may have a significant impact on the lives of citizens and there is a public interest in their deliberations being transparent. These public interests have to be weighed against a strong public interest that policy-making and its implementation are of the highest quality and informed by a full consideration of all the options. Ministers must be able to discuss policy freely and frankly, exchange views on available options and understand their possible implications. The candour of all involved would be affected by their assessment of whether the content of the discussions will be disclosed prematurely. If discussions were routinely made public there is a risk that Ministers may feel inhibited from being frank and candid with one another. As a result the quality of debate underlying collective decision making would decline, leading to worse informed and poorer

	decision making. Taking into account all the circumstances of this case, I have concluded that the balance of the public interest favours withholding this information.
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/130
Month Issued	September 2020
Request	<i>I would like to request a list of all meetings by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland between the start of 2010 and the end of 2014.</i> <i>I would also like to know when each meeting took place and who was present.</i>
Response	I can confirm that the Northern Ireland Office holds some information that you have asked for, however the 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 do not have the requested information stored in one place, so officials would need to open and read a large amount of individual records stored in a number of locations to identify if and where we have the information, then further time spent to identify meeting attendees. We estimate it would cost over £600 to do this. Under section 16 of the Freedom of Information Act we are required to help you bring your request within the cost limit. We suggest making a more targeted request, for example, reducing the date range, and/ or limiting the request to meetings on a particular policy or subject, or if possible be more specific about the information you are looking for. You may also find information you're looking for already published here: https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/northern-ireland-office

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/131
Month Issued	September 2020
Request	<i>To ask the Northern Ireland Office:</i> <i>For a list of the membership of the "Northern Ireland Abortion Scheme Oversight Group"; the names of the chairperson(s); and for a list of dates when this group has met since July 2019.</i>
Response	We have conducted a search of our records and can confirm that the NIO is not aware of which group you are referring to and as such, does not hold any information within the scope of your request.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/132
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Month Issued	September 2020
Request	<i>Please could you provide me with the total cost for reconfiguring ministerial office space, including furniture, decoration and additional works during the 2019/20 financial year.</i>
Response	£8,404.55 was spent reconfiguring ministerial office space, including furniture, decoration and additional works during the 2019/20 financial year.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/133
Month Issued	September 2020
Request	<i>I understand that an order was made on the 29 April 2010 by the Secretary of State by virtue of the Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007 (the "Order"). I understand that the Order directed the closure to vehicle traffic of Lower Chichester Street, Belfast.</i> <i>I cannot locate a copy of the Order and accordingly I am making a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("FOI Act") in order to obtain a copy of the Order. I am not aware of the specific title of the Order but I attach a copy of the Report of the Independent Reviewer, Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007, Seventh Report: 1 August 2013 – 31 July 2014 which references the Order at paragraph 10.6 for your ease of reference.</i>
Response	The Minister of State for Northern Ireland signed a Road Closure Order on behalf of the NI Courts Service which affected the closure of Lower Chichester Street in Belfast with effect from 30 April 2010 until expiry immediately before midnight on 5 September 2010. This Road Closure Order was made by the Minister in exercise of the power upon him by section 32 of the Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007. I have attached a copy of the requested Road Closure Order for your reference. This was an initial short-term order, which was subsequently replaced by an indefinite order, signed by the Minister of State to come into force immediately before midnight on 5 September 2010. In 2012, the 2010 order was replaced by a further order signed by the Minister of State, which came into effect immediately before midnight on 14 May 2012. This is the order which currently applies to the road closure of Lower Chichester Street, Belfast. I have attached a copy of this Road Closure Order for your information also.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/134
Month Issued	September 2020
Request	<i>In your financial accounts for the financial year 2019/20 do you have a section for "losses and special payments"?</i>

	<i>1. If so how much money was accounted for in the 2019/2020 financial year as being "losses and special payments"? (Please note I am aware that the loss may have occurred many years earlier but I am interested in items which were accounted for in the last financial year, irrespective of when the loss took place.)</i> <i>2. Please detail the three largest single amounts within this total, giving a cost for each loss and a detailed description of the claim and the reason for the loss.</i>
Response	Your request has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and I can confirm that the information you have requested is currently being prepared for future publication on gov.uk and therefore this part of your request is refused under FOI s22. We are not obliged to provide information that is intended for future publication (Section 22 of the Act). In line with the terms of this exemption in the Freedom of Information Act, we have considered whether it would be in the public interest for us to provide you with the information ahead of publication, despite the exemption being applicable. In this case, I have concluded that the public interest favours withholding the information.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/135
Month Issued	September 2020
Request	<i>Please could you tell me a) the number of staff within the department who are eligible for privilege days, b) the median salary of the department and c) if possible, an estimate of the cost of privilege days to the department.</i>
Response	In response to your questions a) the number of staff within the department as at 24 August, is 203 staff members; b) the median salary within the department is £39,830. In respect to part c of your question, we do not hold the information requested, in this format.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/136
Month Issued	September 2020
Request	<i>Could you tell me how many lightbulbs the department purchased in 2019/20 at what total cost?</i>
Response	The Northern Ireland Office occupies two office locations, one in Stormont House, Belfast and another in 1 Horse Guards Road, London. Lightbulbs are provided for both buildings through the Facilities Management services at each location. In 1 Horse Guards Road, London these services are included as part of the landlord's service charge. In Stormont House, Belfast the Facilities Management is provided through collaborative contracts for managed services awarded by the Department of Finance Construction and Procurement Delivery (CPD), which is a Centre of Procurement Excellence. Information on these contracts are published on the CPD website.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/138
Month Issued	September 2020
Request	<i>Please could you tell me total spending, if any, by the department on the speaking clock ('Timeline' #123) during 2019/20.</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/20/139
Month Issued	September 2020
Request	<i>Please provide any and all scientific evidence used to back up the recent change in legislation to enforce citizens of Northern Ireland to wear a face covering in a retail setting.</i> <i>Can you also please provide any other information you have on the benefits of wearing a face mask for public safety and also how the wearing of face coverings could affect confidence of citizens in a retail setting?</i>
Response	The Northern Ireland Office does not hold any information within the scope of your request. As this is a devolved matter, I would advise you to contact the Department of Health (NI) at the following email address: FOI@health-ni.gov.uk .

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/140
Month Issued	September 2020
Request	<i>I am writing to you under the freedom of information Act 2000 to request the following information:</i> <i>1. Does your department use any other algorithms and/or artificial intelligence software/ predictive modelling/ automated decision making software to help with any of your work?</i> <i>2. If Yes, please provide details:</i> <i>a) Of the algorithms or artificial intelligence software you use;</i> <i>b) Of whether you use a commercial product or whether you have developed your own system. If it's a commercial product, please say the cost of the contract and whether it was put out for tender or given to a certain organisation.</i> <i>c) Of the purpose for which the algorithm and/or artificial intelligence software operates;</i> <i>d) Of the decisions the algorithm and/or artificial intelligence software is asked to make or assist;</i> <i>e) Of the type, classification and amount of data that the algorithm and/or artificial intelligence software uses in the decision-making process;</i> <i>f) Of the process by which the decision made or assisted by the algorithm is subject to human review;</i>

	<i>g) Of the process by which you inform an individual that they have been subject to a decision made or aided by an algorithm and/or artificial intelligence software?</i> <i>Please also say whether you have done any checks or reviews for any potential bias in the system before implementing it.</i>
Response	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/20/141
Month Issued	September 2020
Request	<i>I am writing to you with a request under the Freedom of Information act.</i> <i>My request relates to Public First, a public policy firm. Their website can be found here http://www.publicfirst.co.uk/</i> <i>1. Under the act, I would like to ask how many contracts have been awarded by the Northern Ireland Office since January 1 2018 to Public First Ltd.</i> <i>2. Under the act, for each of these contracts, I would like to ask when was each of these contracts awarded, what are the duration of each of these contracts, and what is the value of each of these contracts.</i> <i>3. Under the act, for each of these contracts, I would like to ask for a brief description of each contract.</i> <i>4. Under the act, I would like to request complete copies of each of these contracts.</i>
Response	The Northern Ireland Office has not awarded any contracts to Public First Ltd since 1 January 2018.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/143
Month Issued	September 2020
Request	<i>Under the Freedom of Information Act, please could I request the following information:</i> <i>1) Please list the services that require users to verify their identity by sending in physical forms of documentation (e.g. a passport)?</i> <i>a) For each of these services, how many identities were verified in this way in your 2019/20 financial year, and what did it cost to process?</i> <i>b) Are these verifications performed by a third party or conducted by an in-house team?</i>

	2) Please list the services that allow users to use a digital method for proving their identity; and name the methods used (e.g. Gov.UK Verify or other equivalent digital biometric identity method)? a) For each of these services, how many identities were verified in this way in your 2019/20 financial year, and what did it cost to process? <i>By 'identity verification' I mean the same definition used by Government which is 'a digital identity is information used by computer systems to represent a unique person, organisation, application or device. So for a citizen or consumer, a "digital identity" is a trusted way of proving one or more attributes about themselves online or offline and the linkage of those attributes to that same person as a uniquely identifiable individual.'</i>
Response	There are no services within the Northern Ireland Office which require physical forms of identification to be sent in either to a third party provider or in-house. No identities were verified in this manner during the financial year of 2019/20, thus incurring no costs. ID verification is required for the purpose of recruitment within the Northern Ireland Office. Personal identification is digitally requested by our shared service provider from shortlisted candidates as part of the recruitment process. The third party provider utilises a recruitment platform to obtain this information from individuals. During the financial year 2019/20, 37 identities were digitally verified. Identification checks are included within the overall recruitment cost, therefore a cost cannot be provided for this particular service.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/144
Month Issued	September 2020
Request	<i>Under the Freedom of Information Act, I request:</i> <i>How much your department (including its agencies) has spent on (i) consultancy services; (ii) agency staff; and contingency services in each of the last five years?</i>

Response	Please see the requested information for the reporting years 2015/16 to 2019/20 in the table below;		
	Financial Year	Agency Staff costs £	Consultancy costs £
	2015-16	853,719	269,566
	2016-17	1,001,176	125,316
	2017-18	1,039,647	893,372
	2018-19	658,136	1,543,366
	2019-20	1,032,163	1,806,609

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/145
Month Issued	September 2020
Request	<i>I am sending this request under the Freedom of Information Act.</i> 1) <i>Please provide a record of your central register of</i> <i>a) losses</i> <i>b) special payments</i> <i>As defined in HM Treasury's "Managing public money" guidelines.</i> <i>Please provide information for the period April 2017 to date, for payments or losses of the value of £50,000 or more.</i> <i>For each special payment or loss, please provide:</i> <i>I. The category of loss or special payment incurred, such as whether the cost was due to bad debt, a fruitless payment, a compensation payment made under legal obligation or a severance payment.</i> <i>II. The nature, gross amount (or estimate where an accurate value is unavailable), and cause of each loss or special payment</i> <i>III. The financial year in which the loss or payment was formally written off and/or recorded as a loss or special payment.</i> <i>IV. Any action taken as a result of the loss or payment that is centrally held or retrievable within cost.</i> <i>If responding to iv) risks breaching the cost limit, please disregard and provide a response to the remaining questions.</i>

	2) <i>Please provide a copy of your organisation's loss and special payment policy.</i>
Response	I can confirm that the department holds information that you have asked for. The information relating to April 17 to March 19 is exempt under section 21 of the FOI Act because it is reasonably accessible to you, and I am pleased to inform you that you can access it via the following links: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nio-annual-report-and-accounts-2017-18 (Page 78) https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/northern-ireland-office-annual-report-and-accounts-2018-19 (Page 87) Section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act exempts disclosure of information that is reasonably accessible by other means, and the terms of the exemption mean that we do not have to consider whether or not it would be in the public interest for you to have the information. Information you have requested in relation to April 19 to date is being withheld as it is exempt under section 22(1) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 22(1) protects information intended for future publication. Section 22 is a qualified exemption and I have considered whether the balance of the public interest favours maintaining the exemption in section 22(1) or disclosing the information. <u><i>Public Interest Test Example</i></u> Section 22 requires a public interest test. The information you have requested can be found in a subset of the total information to be published. There is a risk that responding to your request and producing this subset would delay production and publication of the larger set of information thereby delaying public access to all NIO's FOI releases. Taking into consideration the government's transparency aims we feel the public interest lies in ensuring publication in full at the earliest opportunity and therefore in applying this exemption. You can learn more about s22 on the Information Commissioner's website here: ICO lo Information intended for future publication and research information (sections 22 and 22A) The Department does not have a specific policy for handling losses and special payments but adheres to HMT's 'Managing Public Money' guidance when dealing with these.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/146
Month Issued	September 2020
Request	<i>I am writing to you with a request under the Freedom of Information act.</i> <i>My request relates to Faculty Science, a digital firm. Their website can be found here https://faculty.ai/</i> <i>1. Under the act, I would like to ask how many contracts have been awarded by the Northern Ireland Office since January 1 2018 to Faculty Science Ltd.</i> <i>2. Under the act, for each of these contracts, I would like to ask when was each of these contracts awarded, what are the duration of each of these contracts, and what is the value of each of these contracts.</i> <i>3. Under the act, for each of these contracts, I would like to ask for a brief description of each contract.</i> <i>4. Under the act, I would like to request complete copies of each of these contracts.</i>
Response	The Northern Ireland Office has not awarded any contracts to Faculty Science Ltd, ASI Data Science or Advanced Skills Initiative Ltd since 1 January 2018.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/147
Month Issued	September 2020
Request	<i>Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, please provide me with full answers to the following questions:</i> <i>1. How many people, including full-time, part-time and temporary employees, are recorded as being based at your main central London headquarters, either by having a desk or a security pass or any other metric that you use?</i> <i>2. Of these, how many were recorded as having entered the headquarters building on the following days:</i> <i>a. Monday 1st June</i> <i>b. Monday 6th July</i> <i>c. Monday 3rd August</i> <i>d. Tuesday 1st September (I realise this is in the future as I write, but the answer will be available by the time you respond)</i> <i>I am sure that these numbers will be available either by checking how many door security cards were activated on the days in question, however it is also likely that your HR department would, for health and safety reasons, by keeping a tally of how many staff were visiting the office.</i>
Response	In response to question one 105 full time, part time and temporary NIO employees are based at 1 Horse Guards Road, London.

	In response to questions 2a, 2b and 2c 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. In response to question 2d 9 were recorded as having entered the headquarters building on Tuesday 1 September.
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/148
Month Issued	September 2020
Request	<i>Under the terms of the 2000 Freedom of Information Act, my Freedom of Information request is about contracts granted by your department.</i> <i>Could you please tell me how many contracts have been granted to the following companies Faculty, Public First and Topham Guerin since July 2019, the value of these contracts and the date in which they were granted?</i>
Response	The Northern Ireland Office has not awarded any contracts to Faculty, Public First or Topham Guerin since July 2019.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/149
Month Issued	September 2020
Request	<i>I write to request the following information under the Freedom of Information Act.</i> <i>1. Between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020, how many external candidates were offered full-time permanent employment contracts as civil servants at the department?</i> <i>2. How many of those external candidates waited - or have been waiting - for more than 12 weeks for the result of their security vetting (at any clearance level)?</i> <i>3. How many of those external candidates waited - or have been waiting - for more than 24 weeks for the result of their national security vetting (at any clearance level)?</i> <i>Please note that "external candidates" refers to candidates who were not previously employed as civil servants.</i>
Response	Between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020 no external candidates were offered full time permanent employment contracts with the Northern Ireland Office.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/20/150
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Month Issued	September 2020
Request	<i>Please could you provide me with some information regarding the use of open source technology within your department?</i> <i>Specifically:</i> <i>• What percentage of proprietary code is made open?</i> <i>• How much is spent on software development each year?</i> <i>• How many software developers does the department currently employ?</i> <i>• How many applications are built using proprietary software, as opposed to open source?</i> <i>• How many software developer vacancies do you currently have (if any)?</i>
Response	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