

APRIL 2021 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION RESPONSES

Year	Month	FOI Reference	Topic
2021	Apr	FOI/21/032	Ministerial meeting with Jo Bamford and Edward Lister
2021	Apr	FOI/21/033	Correspondence with the Northern Ireland Centenary Forum
2021	Apr	FOI/21/034	Procurement of laptop computers
2021	Apr	FOI/21/035	Spending on advertising campaigns
2021	Apr	FOI/21/036	Whistleblowers
2021	Apr	FOI/21/037	New Decade New Approach Joint Board: project funding
2021	Apr	FOI/21/039	Archival file request: intelligence gathering and the civil activities of paramilitary groups
2021	Apr	FOI/21/040	Spending on Union flags
2021	Apr	FOI/21/041	Ministerial correspondence with former Prime Ministers
2021	Apr	FOI/21/042	Removal of Royal portraits
2021	Apr	FOI/21/043	Staff headcount and turnover
2021	Apr	FOI/21/044	Spending on alcoholic drinks
2021	Apr	FOI/21/045	Recruitment and retention allowance for staff in Belfast
2021	Apr	FOI/21/046	Lost or stolen IT devices
2021	Apr	FOI/21/047	Language services frameworks and contracts
2021	Apr	FOI/21/049	Staff recruitment: applicants' ethnicity data
2021	Apr	FOI/21/050	Correspondence with former Prime Minister, David Cameron
2021	Apr	FOI/21/051	Corporate IT services and outsourced contracts
2021	Apr	FOI/21/052	Archival files request: Stalker/Sampson Inquiry

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/032
Month Issued	April 2021
Request	<i>This is a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act. I would like to be provided with the following information:</i> <i>Regarding the following meetings between Julian Smith and Jo Bamford / Ed Lister recorded in transparency data on 30th September 2020:</i> https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/903933/January to March 2020 - SoS NI - Meetings.csv/preview <i>I would like the following information</i> <i>• The duration of each of this meeting.</i> <i>• The agenda of this meeting</i> <i>• The minutes of each of the meeting, and, if available, complete or redacted transcripts.</i> <i>• Concerns raised by the attendees</i> <i>• Resolutions which arose from the meeting</i> <i>• Any emails or letters sent between the attendees from 1st January to 1st April 2020.</i>
Response	The 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(1) (a) is a qualified exemption, which means that the decision to disclose the requested material is subject to the public interest test. When assessing whether or not it was in the public interest to disclose the information to you, we took into account the following factors: • Public interest considerations favouring disclosure • The public having a greater understanding of Government policy; • Greater transparency of Government policy. These public interests have been 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. This could potentially damage the Government's policy-making process for economic investment, which remains ongoing. Taking into account all the circumstances of this case, we reached the view that, on balance, the public interest favours withholding this information at this time. Information you have requested is also 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.
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/033
Month Issued	April 2021
Request	<i>This is a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act in relation to events to mark the centenary of Northern Ireland. (https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-i..)</i> <i>I would like to request the following information:</i> <i>A copy of all correspondence and communications between the Department and NI Centenary Forum from October 1 2020 to the date this request is received. This could include emails, briefing notes, presentations, research or any other documents created in relation to the forum.</i>
Response	I can confirm that the Northern Ireland Office holds some information that you have asked for. However, we cannot disclose this information because the cost of complying with your request would exceed the limit set by the Freedom of Information Act. Freedom of information law allows us to decline to answer FOI requests when we estimate it would cost us more than £600 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 locate, open and read a significant amount of archived records, we consider this would cost over £600 (section 12 FOIA).

	We appreciate that you have already refined this request twice. In order for us to be able to answer your request we ask that you reconsider the scope of your FOI request, for example by identifying specific topics or areas of the Centenary programme and over a shorter time-frame. However, please note that a revised request may still not fall within the FOIA cost limit. You can find more information by reading the full text of the Act, available at http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/section/12
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/034												
Month Issued	April 2021												
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>• The number of laptop computers purchased over the last 3 years (2018-2020), to be broken down by year</i> <i>• The condition of those laptops purchased (e.g. brand new, refurbished)</i> <i>• Details of procurement processes, with respect to the replacement of laptops (e.g. replaced every 3 years)</i>												
Response	In response to your enquiry: - Laptops purchased between 2018 and 2020 broken down by year including condition <table><tr><th>Year</th><th>Laptops Purchased</th><th>Condition</th></tr><tr><td>2018</td><td>56</td><td>New</td></tr><tr><td>2019</td><td>80</td><td>New</td></tr><tr><td>2020</td><td>14</td><td>New</td></tr></table> Regarding procurement processes, we use a NICS collaborative contract framework 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. Our latest procurement was to replace machines between three and five years old.	Year	Laptops Purchased	Condition	2018	56	New	2019	80	New	2020	14	New
Year	Laptops Purchased	Condition											
2018	56	New											
2019	80	New											
2020	14	New											

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/035
Month Issued	April 2021
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>

	1. <i>The amount of money the Northern Ireland Office has spent each year on advertising (including TV, radio, internet and print advertising) over the past 2 years.</i> <i>If it is possible within the cost limit, could you also tell me:</i> 2. <i>The amount of money spent on each Northern Ireland Office advertising campaign over the past two years (please specify the name of each campaign)</i> <i>a. If possible, could you please specify the aims of each campaign</i> <i>If the request labelled "2." causes the FOI request to exceed the cost limit, please only give information in regard to the request labelled "1."</i>
Response	In response to your query I can confirm that the Northern Ireland Office holds some of the information that you have asked for and you can find information on any departmental costs over £25,000 in our monthly transparency data publication, which can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nio-transparency-data-on-gpc-and-spending-over-25000-november-2020 The brand 'Our Story in the Making: NI Beyond 100' was created in the spirit of inclusivity, mutual respect and optimism for Northern Ireland, respecting all perspectives, as we go beyond 100 years. Our aim is to recognise the stories of the people of Northern Ireland from all communities and geographic areas, past and present throughout Northern Ireland's Centenary year. In relation to your other requests, we have checked our records and we are unable to provide you with this information because the cost of complying with your request would exceed the limit set by the Freedom of Information Act. Freedom of information law allows us to decline to answer FOI requests when we estimate it would cost us more than £600 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 other requests on this basis, as to locate, identify and retrieve the information would cost over £600. We have made the decision to decline the majority of your requests 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 locate, open and read 1000s of archived records, we consider this would cost over £600.

	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 time frame bearing in mind we are only obliged to keep accounting records for 7 years. We cannot guarantee that a revised request will fall within costs limits. 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/21/036
Month Issued	April 2021
Request	1. <i>How many reports did you receive from whistle-blowers in 2019 and in 2020?</i> 2. <i>How many people do you have in your organisation that are trained/permitted to take reports from whistle-blowers?</i> 3. <i>What training have the people in question number 2 received in whistleblowing?</i> 4. <i>What cost, if any, was there for this training?</i> 5. <i>Which organisation delivered each course?</i> 6. <i>What is the name of the person that arranged this training and what is their email address?</i> 7. <i>What methods do you have for whistle-blowers to contact a person that is authorised to take their report and what are the specific details of these, i.e., email addresses, telephone numbers etc?</i> 8. <i>What are the email addresses for the people authorised to receive whistleblower reports?</i> 9. <i>How many whistle-blowers have left the organisation within 12 months of making a report?</i> 10. <i>How many whistle-blowers have made an allegation of 'detriment' against your organisation?</i>
Response	In response to your first question I am able to confirm there were no whistleblowing reports in 2019 or 2020. Given there were no incidents of this type of reporting, the answer to your ninth and tenth question is that no whistle-blowers have left the organisation or alleged detriment against the organisation. In relation to question two, in line with our Whistleblowing and Raising a Complaint Policy, reports can be made to a number of people across the organisation including; line managers, another senior manager, HR Manager or Head of Corporate Governance, Audit Committee's Chair, a Trade Union representative, any of the Staff Networks or nominated officers.

	In respect of questions four, five and six, our nominated officers are able to avail of a range of training materials and events developed by the Civil Service at nil cost to the department. In answer to question seven, if staff would like to raise a whistleblowing report they can do this by phone, email or by direct contact with the people outlined in question two. I have considered question eight and I can confirm that the department holds information that you have asked for, but in this case we will not be providing it to you as it is exempt from disclosure. In response to your question 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.
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/037
Month Issued	April 2021
Request	<i>I would like to request the following in relation to New Decade New Approach funding:</i> <i>The membership of the Joint Board overseeing funding for NDNA projects</i> <i>Minutes of all meetings</i> <i>Any decisions taken on funding for the Derry addiction unit</i>
Response	With respect to the information requested at point 1, I can confirm that the members of the Joint Board are: - Secretary of State for Northern Ireland; and - The First Minister and deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland. I can confirm that the Northern Ireland Office holds information falling within the scope of points 2 and 3 of your request. However, this information is exempt from release under Section 35(1) (a) and (b) and Section 28 of the FOIA for the following reasons. Section 28 FOIA states that information is exempt if its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice relations between any administration in the United Kingdom and any other such administration, in this case the Northern Ireland Executive.

	Section 28 FOIA is a qualified exemption, meaning it is subject to the public interest test, to determine whether it is in the public interest to withhold or release the information. It is recognised that there is a public interest in understanding and being able to contribute to the debate on relations between different administrations within the UK; and the fact that openness in government can increase public trust in and engagement with, government and the devolved administrations. But on the other hand, it is in the public interest that the devolution settlement is protected by allowing an ongoing atmosphere of trust, co-operation, sharing of information on a range of important issues, without premature disclosure of information which could disrupt that position. After careful consideration we have concluded that section 28 is engaged in this case and it is in the public interest to withhold the relevant information requested. If you require further guidance on section 28 please see attached ICO guidance on section 28 of the FOI Act at https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/section-28-relations-within-the-uk/ Furthermore, section 35(1)(a) FOIA states that information is exempt if it relates to the formulation or development of government policy. Section 35 is a qualified exemption, meaning it is to be considered whether the balance of the public interest favours our release of this material. It is recognised that 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. However, 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. Disclosure in this case would weaken the ability of the NIO, UK ministers, and NI Executive Ministers' to discuss these important matters, as part of the public policy development process, including considerations of the pros and cons of different options, 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 information requested. 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
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/039
Month Issued	April 2021
Request	<i>I am writing to request, under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the release of four Northern Ireland Office records. These records are:</i>

	<i>CJ 4/3115</i> <i>CJ 4/3136</i> <i>CJ 4/3138</i> <i>CJ 4/2846</i> <i>According to the National Archives catalogue each of these records is currently closed or retained by the Northern Ireland Office, under Section 3(4) of the Public Records Act 1958.</i> <i>I have checked on your website and in the National Archives catalogue and neither of these records has yet been released.</i>
Response	We confirm that the department holds information that you have asked for, but we will not be providing it to you as it is exempt from disclosure. Some of the information you have requested could be exempt under section 23(1) of the Freedom of Information Act, which relates to the bodies dealing with security matters, although it is also possible that the information relates to none of the bodies dealing with security matters. Sections 23(1) and 24(1) are being cited in the alternative as it is not appropriate, in the circumstances of the case, to say which of the two exemptions is actually engaged so as not to undermine national security or reveal the extent of any involvement, or not, of the bodies dealing with security matters. Section 23 is an absolute exemption and the Northern Ireland Office is not required to consider whether the public interest favours disclosure of this information. Any information that is not exempt from disclosure under section 23(1) could be exempt under section 24(1) of the Freedom of Information Act, which exempts information from disclosure if its exemption is required for the purpose of safeguarding national security. For the reasons given above under section 23, we cannot say which of the two exemptions is actually engaged, and to the extent to which section 24(1) is engaged we are not obliged to give any further explanation by virtue of section 17(4) because to do so would involve the disclosure of information which would itself be exempt. Section 24 is a qualified exemption and I have considered whether the balance of the public interest favours releasing or withholding this information. 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 have weighed these public interests against a very strong public interest in safeguarding national security. It is important that this sensitive information is protected, as disclosure of information in this case, if held, would damage national security. Taking into account all the circumstances of this case I have determined that the balance of the public interest favours withholding this information.

	You can find more information by reading the full text of the Act, available at http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/section/23 http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/section/24
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/040
Month Issued	April 2021
Request	<i>I am writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request the following information. Please may you provide me with:</i> <i>A breakdown of the number of Union Flags ordered by your Department over the last year, including the date of purchase and price paid.</i>
Response	In response to your request, the Northern Ireland Office did not purchase any Union flags within the past 12 months.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/041
Month Issued	April 2021
Request	<i>Please can you provide me with a list of all advocacy correspondence sent by any former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to any minister at the Northern Ireland Office between March 1, 2020 and 26 March, 2021?</i> <i>Please can you provide me with complete copies of each piece of advocacy correspondence listed in the answer to question 1?</i> <i>Please can you provide me with a list of all correspondence related to advocacy sent from any minister at the Northern Ireland Office to any former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom between March 1, 2020 and 26 March, 2021?</i> <i>Please can you provide me with complete copies of each piece of correspondence listed in the answer to question 3?</i> <i>Background:</i> Advocacy correspondence, as explained in detail in the Upper Tribunal and Supreme Court's decisions in the Prince Charles/Evans case, does not include correspondence that is purely social or personal. Instead, it is correspondence that involves someone promoting their views or seeking to advance their work, the work of a charity or company and this is disclosable. The correspondence can include emails, phone messages and paper correspondence. <i>Should a public interest test be required, please note that I have specifically requested information relating to advocacy correspondence, rather than all correspondence. As you will be aware, on 26 March 2015 the Supreme Court ruled in favour of publishing advocacy correspondence between the government and the Prince of Wales. This was before the law provided an</i>

	<i>absolute exemption regarding correspondence with the heir to the Throne. At the time, the publication of correspondence between Government ministers and the Prince of Wales was also subject to the public interest test.</i> <i>The Supreme Court noted the public interest in disclosure, which had previously been identified at the Upper Tribunal. These included: Governmental accountability and transparency; the increased understanding of the interaction between government and Monarchy; a public understanding of the influence, if any, of The Prince of Wales on matters of public policy; an interest in disclosure in light of media stories focusing on The Prince of Wales' alleged inappropriate interference, or lobbying; furthering the public debate regarding the constitutional role of the Monarchy, and in particular the heir to the Throne; and informing broader debate surrounding constitutional reform.</i> <i>The public interest arguments against disclosure – which were dismissed – centred upon The Prince of Wales's preparation for kingship and the importance of not undermining his future role as Sovereign.</i> <i>In the case of my request, the public interest in disclosing the information that I have requested include: Governmental accountability and transparency; the increased understanding of the interaction between government and former Prime Ministers; a public understanding of the influence, if any, of former Prime Ministers on matters of public policy; an interest in disclosure in light of media stories focusing on David Cameron's alleged inappropriate interference, or lobbying; furthering the public debate regarding the role of former Prime Ministers in government. In this case, there is no concern about preparation for kingship.</i>
Response	We have conducted a thorough search of our records and can confirm that the Northern Ireland Office does not hold any information within scope of your request.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/042
Month Issued	April 2021
Request	<i>What happened to the Royal portraits of the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh that were formerly displayed in Stormont House before they were removed following staff objections? Where are they now?</i>
Response	The portraits of HM the Queen and HRH Prince Philip are part of the collection managed by Historic Royal Palaces, and are located at Hillsborough Castle, the Secretary of State's Official Residence. At Stormont House, portraits of Her Majesty The Queen are on display in the public area of Stormont House, alongside other images of the Royal family and other artwork celebrating the work of the Department.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/043
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Month Issued	April 2021																												
Request	<i>What is the number of staff currently employed by the Northern Ireland Office at the latest date?</i> <i>What was the staff turnover in each year from 2010 to 2020 and the number of those promoted?</i>																												
Response	In response to your first question, the number of staff currently working in the NIO is 162. In response to the first part of your second question, please see the table below for the years 2014-15 to 2019-20 inclusive. The figures include the routine ending of loans and secondments, which make up a significant part of the NIO workforce. The NIO does not hold the information prior to 2014-15. <table><tr><th>Year</th><th>Headcount</th><th>Number of Leavers</th><th>% Staff Turnover</th></tr><tr><td>2014-15</td><td>136</td><td>45</td><td>20%</td></tr><tr><td>**2015-16</td><td>129</td><td>51</td><td>38.49%</td></tr><tr><td>2016-17</td><td>136</td><td>25</td><td>18.87%</td></tr><tr><td>2017-18</td><td>162</td><td>26</td><td>17.45%</td></tr><tr><td>2018-19</td><td>170</td><td>43</td><td>25.90%</td></tr><tr><td>2019-20</td><td>206</td><td>41</td><td>21.81%</td></tr></table> **The 2015-16 year included a number of staff who left via a Civil Service Voluntary Exit Scheme. In response to the second part of your second question, we do not hold information on the number of promoted staff from 2010 to 2020.	Year	Headcount	Number of Leavers	% Staff Turnover	2014-15	136	45	20%	**2015-16	129	51	38.49%	2016-17	136	25	18.87%	2017-18	162	26	17.45%	2018-19	170	43	25.90%	2019-20	206	41	21.81%
Year	Headcount	Number of Leavers	% Staff Turnover																										
2014-15	136	45	20%																										
**2015-16	129	51	38.49%																										
2016-17	136	25	18.87%																										
2017-18	162	26	17.45%																										
2018-19	170	43	25.90%																										
2019-20	206	41	21.81%																										

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/044			
Month Issued	April 2021			
Request	For each of the last 5 financial years what has been the NIO's expenditure on alcoholic drinks of all types including beers, wines, sparkling and spirits?			
	What are the ten most expensive alcoholic drinks purchased in each of the last 5 financial years and how much did they cost?			
Response	In response to your request, the Northern Ireland Office spent the following amounts on Alcoholic Beverages			
	Financial Year	Amount (Exc. VAT)	10 Most Expensive Items	Price of Each (Exc. VAT)
	2016-2017	£375.60	White Wine (10x bottles)	£12.66

	2017-2018	£391.60	Red Wine (10x bottles)	£10.66	
	2018-2019	£479.40	White Wine (10x bottles)	£6.66	
	2019-2020	£487.30	White Wine (10x bottles)	£6.66	
	2020-2021	£0.00	n/a	n/a	

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/045
Month Issued	April 2021
Request	<i>What is the current value per person of the Recruitment and Retention Allowance paid to NIO staff in Belfast?</i> <i>What is the total annual cost of all Recruitment and Retention Allowances paid to NIO staff in Belfast?</i> <i>Are all staff eligible for this allowance? Are there different rates depending on grade, and if so, what are the different rates?</i>
Response	In response to questions one and two. 39 Belfast based staff are in receipt of a retention and recruitment allowance, this equates to an annual cost of £184,000 per a year. The current value per person receiving a recruitment and retention allowance within Belfast is therefore £4,717.95. In response to question three. The Northern Ireland Office recruitment and retention allowance is only applicable to staff working and located in Belfast and who are of a specific grade. Band A staff are entitled to an allowance of £6,000 per annum and Band B staff are entitled to an allowance of £4,000 per an annum. This is clearly stated within our job adverts.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/046
Month Issued	April 2021
Request	<i>How many officially issued laptops or tablets have been reported lost or stolen in the NIO for each of the last five years?</i> <i>What is the value of the loss?</i>
Response	In respect of questions: The Northern Ireland Office can neither confirm nor deny that it holds the information that you have requested. We are not obliged to confirm or deny whether we hold the information you have requested as if held, this would prejudice the prevention or detection of crime, the apprehension or prosecution of offenders or the exercise by any public authority of

	its functions for the purpose of ascertaining whether any person has failed to comply with the law. Section 31(3) of the Act provides that there is no duty to confirm or deny whether we hold the information. The fact section 31(3) of the Act has been cited, should not be taken as an indication that the information you requested is or is not held by the department. <u>Public interest considerations</u> The exemption in section 31(3) is a qualified exemption and we have considered whether the balance of the public interest favours releasing or withholding this information. There is a general public interest in disclosure of information and we recognise that openness in government may increase public trust in and engagement with the government. We also recognise a public interest in assuring the public that effective arrangements are in place for the prevention and detection of crime. We have weighed these public interests against a strong public interest in the prevention and detection of crime. It is contrary to this public interest to disclose information which would facilitate the commission of crime or hinder its detection. Taking into account all the circumstances of this case, we have concluded that the balance of the public interest favours withholding this information.
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FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/047
Month Issued	April 2021
Request	<i>I write to request the below information under the Freedom of Information Act.</i> <i>Are you on any of the below frameworks for language services (face to face interpreting spoken and non-spoken, telephone and video interpreting and translation) if so which one?</i> <i>Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO)</i> <i>London Procurement Partnership (LPP)</i> <i>NHS SBS</i> <i>North East Purchasing Organisation (NEPO)</i> <i>NOECPC</i> <i>Health Trust Europe (HTE)</i> <i>Crown Commercial Services (CCS)</i> <i>If you are not on any of the above frameworks please confirm how you are accessing services.</i>

	3. <i>What is the expiry date/s of your current language services contracts including telephone interpreting, face to face interpreting spoken and non-spoken and translation?</i> 4. <i>Who is your current provider for each of these services?</i> 5. <i>What was the spend by year for the last 2 financial years (2018 and 2019) in total and broken down by service</i> • <i>Telephone Interpreting</i> • <i>Face to Face Interpreting</i> • <i>British Sign Language</i> • <i>Translation</i> 6. <i>Who is the Contract Manager and Senior Responsible Owner in regard to language services?</i>
Response	In response to your enquiry: - The Northern Ireland Office is not on any of the listed frameworks for language services. We use a NICS (Northern Ireland Civil Service) collaborative contract framework 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/21/049
Month Issued	April 2021
Request	<i>I am writing under the Freedom of Information Act and would like to know the following:</i> 1. <i>How many jobs were advertised for positions in your department between January 31st 2020 and January 31st 2021?</i> 2. <i>In this time period, how many applicants applied for each job?</i> 3. <i>In this time period, what percentage of applicants were from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) background?</i> 4. <i>In this time period, how many positions were filled by applicants from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) background?</i>
Response	In response to question one. The Northern Ireland Office advertised 47 jobs via the Civil Service Jobs Platform from 31st January 2020 to 31st January 2021.

In response to question 2. Please refer to appendix A, this provides the breakdown of information you have requested, the total number of applications received for this period was 1037. 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 where the figures are fewer than 5 we believe 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 3. The diversity declaration data held by the Northern Ireland Office for this period cannot be deemed as fully qualitative, applicants can choose to decline to share information surrounding their ethnic background. Data is only currently available for the period of January to December 2020, of the 938 applications received in this period 14.9% declared themselves as being from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) background.

In response to question 4. 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 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.

Appendix A

Month	Number of Vacancies	Number of Applications
January 2020	1	7
February 2020	2	Not provided < 5
		Not provided < 5
March 2020	4	26
		21
		6
		7
April 2020	2	Not provided < 5
		44
May 2020	2	Not provided < 5
		Not provided < 5

	June 2020	5	23	
			7	
			11	
			5	
			Not provided < 5	
	July 2020	4	62	
			60	
			5	
			7	
	August 2020	5	92	
			13	
			19	
			28	
			50	
	September 2020	4	83	
			42	
			72	
			45	
	October 2020	5	10	
			48	
			Not provided < 5	
			35	
			31	
	November 2020	3	Not provided < 5	
			23	
			13	
	December 2020	2	5	
			38	
	January 2021	8	9	
			12	
			8	
			15	

			3	
			18	
			8	
			26	

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/050
Month Issued	April 2021
Request	<i>I would like to make a request under the Freedom of Information Act.</i> <i>Please could you provide:</i> <i>1. Copies of all written correspondence that the Secretary of State has had with former Prime Minister, David Cameron at any point during 2020.</i> <i>2. Copies of all written correspondence that the Permanent Secretary has had with former Prime Minister, David Cameron at any point during 2020.</i> <i>For the avoidance of doubt, written correspondence should include text, WhatsApp and Signal messages, as well as emails and letters.</i>
Response	We have conducted a thorough search of our records and can confirm that the Northern Ireland Office does not hold any information within scope of your request.

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/051		
Month Issued	April 2021		
Request	Under the Freedom of Information Act, please could I request the following information:		
	1. Please confirm your FTE		
	2. Please advise what technologies (including version) you use for:		
		Name of technology	Version used
	HR		
	Payroll		

	<i>L&D</i>			
	<i>Finance</i>			
	<i>Procurement</i>			
	<i>Contact Centre</i>			
	3. Please advise if any of the following services are outsourced to third parties, and if so, when does the contract end?			
		Outsourced?	If so, name of organisation outsourced to	Contract end date
	<i>HR</i>			
	<i>Payroll</i>			
	<i>L&D</i>			
	<i>Finance</i>			
<i>Procurement</i>				
<i>Contact Centre</i>				
Response	1) Please confirm your FTE Full time equivalent at the Northern Ireland Office is currently 158.			
	2) Please advise what technologies (including version) you use In response to question two. The Northern Ireland Office has a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in place with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) to utilise a range of services, including HR related platforms to manage HR outputs. The platforms detailed in the below table are not directly procured by the Northern Office and a number of these are managed by third party providers. This is also applicable to our finance services where an MOU is in place between ourselves and the Northern Ireland Civil Service to supply Account NI, a platform to manage our expenditure.			
		Name of technology	Version used	
	<i>HR</i>	<i>Oleeo ATS - managed by our shared service provider.</i>	<i>Human Resources utilise a system provided by the Ministry of</i>	

			Justice. This information may be available from the Ministry of Justice who can be contacted at data.access@justice.gov.uk .
Payroll	Managed by our shared service providers		Human Resources utilise a system provided by the Ministry of Justice. This information may be available from the Ministry of Justice who can be contacted at data.access@justice.gov.uk .
L&D	Civil Service Learning (known as the learning website)		Exempt
Finance	Account NI		Finance utilise a system provided by the Department of Finance, Northern Ireland. This information may be available from the Department of Finance, Northern Ireland who can be contacted at foi@finance-ni.gov.uk .
Procurement	Managed by Department of Finance Northern Ireland		Finance utilise a system provided by the Department of Finance, Northern Ireland. This information may be available from the Department of Finance, Northern Ireland who can be contacted at foi@finance-ni.gov.uk .
Contact Centre	No information - managed by our shared service providers		Human Resources utilise a system provided by the Ministry of Justice. This information may be available from the Ministry of Justice who can be contacted at data.access@justice.gov.uk .

3) Please advise if any of the following services are outsourced to third parties, and if so, when does the contract end?

In response to question three. Details of supplier contracts and agreements can be found on the Crown Commercial Service website - <https://www.crowncommercial.gov.uk/agreements/search?q=HR>

	Outsourced?	If so, name of organisation outsourced to	Contract end date
HR	Yes	Shared Services Connected Ltd	31 October 2021
Payroll	Yes	Shared Services Connected Ltd	31 October 2021
L&D	Civil Service Learning (known as the learning website)	No supplier, the product was built bespoke for the civil	There is no expiry date on this platform

			<i>service and is maintained and supported internally</i>	
	<i>Finance</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Account NI</i>	<i>31 March 2023</i>
	<i>Procurement</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Department of Finance Northern Ireland</i>	<i>This information may be available from the Department of Finance, Northern Ireland who can be contacted at foi@finance-ni.gov.uk.</i>
	<i>Contact Centre</i>	<i>MoJ</i>	<i>Shared Services Connected Ltd</i>	<i>31 October 2021</i>

FOI Request Reference	FOI/21/052
Month Issued	April 2021
Request	<i>I wish to have access to the files from the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) concerning the advice and correspondence relating to the removal of Deputy Chief Constable John Stalker from the Northern Ireland inquiry in 1986 and the appointment of Chief Constable Colin Sampson to complete Stalker's inquiry and to investigate the disciplinary charges brought against John Stalker.</i> <i>I must emphasise that I do not seek access to either Stalker's or Sampson's report but to the advice and correspondence relating to Stalker's removal and Sampson's appointments.</i> <i>The Public Record's catalogue notes that the following files under the title "RUC: Stalker/Sampson inquiry, inquiry by John Stalker and Colin Sampson into police shootings in NI". All these files have now been retained by the NIO for the past 35 years.</i> <i>CJ4/6274</i> <i>CJ4/6275</i> <i>CJ4/6276</i> <i>CJ4/6277</i> <i>CJ4/6278</i> <i>CJ4/6279</i> <i>CJ4/6285</i> <i>CJ4/6286</i> <i>CJ4/6901</i>

	• <i>CJ4/6902</i> • <i>CJ4/6953</i> • <i>CJ4/7464</i> • <i>CJ4/7455</i>
Response	We confirm that the department holds information that you have asked for, but some of it is exempt from disclosure under section 22 of the Freedom of Information Act. As you are aware from the response to your previous FOI/19/133 the files have been retained by the NIO under S22 and this remains the case. The Advisory Council agreed our case for retaining the files in-house because of the clear possibility of their being required by the Coroner in relation to the inquest, and by Police Scotland. The dates for the inquests have yet to be set; and Police Scotland's investigations have not yet concluded. In the light of this, the NIO is unable to make records publicly available. At the point when this does become possible, we will take all necessary steps to ensure that your requests are handled promptly. In addition, some of the information you have requested could be exempt under section 23(1) of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), which relates to the bodies dealing with security matters, although it is also possible that the information relates to none of the bodies dealing with security matters. Sections 23(1) and 24(1) are being cited in the alternative, as it is not appropriate, in the circumstances of the case, to say which of the two exemptions is actually engaged so as not to undermine national security or reveal the extent of any involvement, or not, of the bodies dealing with security matters. Section 23 is an absolute exemption and the Northern Ireland Office is not required to consider whether the public interest favours disclosure of this information. Any information that is not exempt from disclosure under section 23(1) could be exempt under section 24(1) of the FOIA, which exempts information from disclosure if its exemption is required for the purpose of safeguarding national security. For the reasons given above under section 23, we cannot say which of the two exemptions is actually engaged, and to the extent to which section 24(1) is engaged we are not obliged to give any further explanation by virtue of section 17(4) because to do so would involve the disclosure of information which would itself be exempt. Section 24 is a qualified exemption and I have considered whether the balance of the public interest favours releasing or withholding this information. 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 have weighed these public interests against a very strong public interest in safeguarding national security. It is important that this sensitive information is protected, as disclosure of information in this case, if held, would damage national security. Taking into account all the circumstances of this case I have determined that the balance of the public interest favours withholding this information.

Additional information is also withheld under section 40(2) of the FOIA. 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, 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.

You can find more information by reading the full text of the Act, available at:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/section/22>

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

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

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

Please be assured that the NIO is working hard to publish all disclosable information to The National Archives as quickly as possible.