



L E Thomas

By email: request-670662-f2c98eeb@whatdotheyknow.com

FOI Reference: FOI2020/08020

29/06/2020

Dear L E Thomas

I refer to your request where you asked:

“According to the Department for Health and Social Care, the DHSC spent £7.2m on communications activity relating to coronavirus in 2019/20 - as of data available June 10th. The DHSC states the Cabinet Office has now centralised funding of the coronavirus public information campaign.

- How much has been spent on communications activity relating to coronavirus in 2019/20?*
- If you hold figures documenting the regional and city split of this funding across the UK, please also provide this breakdown.*
- If you hold figures documenting the split between broadcast and print media and 'ambient' or 'outdoor' media (billboards, on or in trains or buses, bus shelter advertising, etc.) please provide this.*
- If you hold figures documenting the spend on social media advertising (Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Tik Tok etc.) please provide this too.”*

I am writing to advise you that following a search of our paper and electronic records, I have established that the information you requested is held by the Cabinet Office.

The Government has developed a national public information campaign to provide information, guidance and reassurance to the public on the coronavirus. Like other

government campaigns, the campaign has used national advertising including TV, SMS, Radio, Press, Print, Digital and Outdoor advertising across owned, earned and paid for channels.

The costs of this campaign will be published monthly on a rolling basis as part of routine government transparency here: www.gov.uk/government/collections/cabinet-office-spend-data. This will be broken down by supplier.

Therefore, the information you have requested regarding the costs of the campaign and the companies involved is being withheld as it is exempt under Section 22(1)(a) of the Freedom Of Information Act. Section 22(1)(a) exempts information if it is held by the public authority with a view to its publication at a future date.

Section 22 is qualified by the public interest test. The Freedom of Information Act recognises the desirability of information being freely available in its own right, but Section 22 also acknowledges that public authorities must have freedom to be able to determine their own publication timetables. This allows them to deal with the necessary preparation, administration and context of publication.

After weighing up the public and commercial interest considerations, we consider it is reasonable in all the circumstances that the information held should be withheld from disclosure according to Section 22(1)(a) and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

I have considered the point you make about the potential longevity of this health crisis and how there may be no medium term convenient time to share this information. However, the publishing of campaign spend is part of routine government transparency arrangements upheld by the Cabinet Office and I consider that there is no great public interest in releasing the requested information before it's intended, regular publication date.

You have also asked for 'figures documenting the regional and city split of this funding across the UK'. Cabinet Office is unable to comply with this part of your request as doing so would exceed the appropriate cost limit. Section 12(1) of the Freedom of Information Act relieves public authorities of the duty to comply with a request for information if the cost of dealing with it would exceed the appropriate limit.

The appropriate limit has been specified in regulations and for central Government this is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 3.5 working days in determining whether the Department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting it.

The reason that your request exceeds the cost limit is that it could be contained in a large number of files. Searching all those that might contain relevant information to

locate, retrieve, review and extract any information relevant to your request will exceed the appropriate limit laid down in the Regulations.

If you wish, you may refine your request in order to bring the cost of determining whether the Cabinet Office holds relevant information, locating, retrieving and extracting it, below the appropriate limit. For instance, you could refine the locations specified in your request to a singular region or particular city.

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request or wish to request an internal review, you should write to:

Eirian Walsh Atkins
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2AS

email: foi-team@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

You should note that the Cabinet Office will not normally accept an application for internal review if it is received more than two months after the date that the reply was issued.

If you are not content with the outcome of your internal review, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by Cabinet Office. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. B. M.', written in a cursive style.

FOI Team
Cabinet Office