

C Prosho

FOI Reference: 5743292

Date: 14 April 2022

request-846370-8e554fc7@whatdotheyknow.com

Dear C Prosho

Your Freedom of Information Request

Thank you for your request, detailed below, which we received on 21 March 2022.

"The EHRC recently (Feb / March 2022) awarded a research contract to City University (University of London) to "find ways" to "reduce distress" and "foster good relations and respect" between the opposing sides in the debate." in regards to rights for transgender people in the UK.

Please provide copies of all communications (email, letter, telephone transcripts) between the EHRC and City Uni (or their representatives) as well as meeting notes held by the EHRC in regards to any aspect of this research & its commissioning. "

This request is being handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Response

We can confirm that Equality and Human Rights Commission holds the information you requested; however we are withholding the information as we consider the Section 22A 'Research' exemption applies.

Section 22A Research

Section 22A provides an exemption for information obtained from a programme of research where:

- the programme is still under way;

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- there is an intention to publish a report of the research and
- disclosure of the information would or would be likely to prejudice the research programme, the interests of participants in the programme, or a public authority holding or intending to publish a report of the research.

The exemption applies to information 'obtained in the course of, or derived from, a programme of research'. It covers a wide range of information relating to the research project including information that is not necessarily going to be published, such as relevant email exchanges.

We are satisfied that all parts of the exemption are met.

The programme of research is still underway and there is an intention to publish a report later this year. We consider that disclosure of the information at this stage would be likely to prejudice the ongoing research. This is because information disclosed would be likely to attract media attention and comment on social media which risks influencing the research participants' willingness to engage and potentially the quality of responses.

As this is a qualified exemption we have considered whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption is greater than the public interest in disclosing the requested information. Our considerations are detailed below:

Factors in favour of disclosure

- Presumption under the Freedom of Information Act of disclosure. There is a general public interest in promoting transparency and accountability.
- There is a legitimate public interest in the subject the information relates to.

Factors in favour of withholding

- Prior to receiving this request we had made a commitment not to publish information until the final data collection stage of the research programme has been completed.
- Release of information prior to completion of the research programme risks affecting the quality of the research as it is likely to generate attention which may influence the research participants and the quality of their responses.
- It is not in the public interest to jeopardise the quality and scope of the research.

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On balance we have determined that the public interest in maintaining the exemption is greater than the public interest in disclosure at this time.

This response therefore acts as a refusal notice under section 17 of the FoIA.

Internal Review

If you are unhappy with our response and wish to request an internal review please write to the Information Governance Team within 40 days of receiving this letter setting out your reasons at:

Email: foi@equalityhumanrights.com

or

Equality and Human Rights Commission
2nd Floor Arndale House
The Arndale Centre
Manchester
M4 3AQ

During the independent review the handling of your request will be reassessed by Commission staff afresh.

If following the review you are not content with the outcome you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) at:

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

Generally the ICO will not provide a decision until you have exhausted the review process within the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

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We will now close your request as of this date.

Yours sincerely

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