



Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

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By email

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Our ref: 15/07/cs/816

13 August 2020

Dear Lee Odams

Re: Scientific evidence and guidelines and guidance for businesses

Thank you for your email dated 15 July 2020. In accordance with Section 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act), I can confirm that Public Health England (PHE) does hold the information you have specified.

Your Request

There is now good solid scientific opinion among some of the world's eminent scientists that covid 19 is transmitted by airborne particles known as aerosols. Professor Kimberly Prather Distinguished Professor and Distinguished Chair in Atmospheric Chemistry, University of California is just one of those.

Science suggests that long-term exposure (15+ mins) in close proximity to people in poorly-ventilated small break rooms & dining areas where there's no social distancing & no one's wearing face masks (b/c they're optional)] is a problem.

UK businesses implement Health & Safety measures to protect their staff based upon guidance from you.

Please provide me with details of any scientific evidence / guidance you have or are currently receiving and why you are not updating UK businesses with this as it stands your guidance on this is at best weak or non existent.

Response

PHE can confirm it does hold this information. However, the information is exempt under section 21 of the FOI Act because it 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. However for your convenience we have included the following link to a report which looked at the role of aerosol transmission in COVID-19:

assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907587/s0643-nervtag-emg-role-aerosol-transmission-covid-19-sage-48.pdf

If you have any queries regarding the information that has been supplied to you, please refer your query to in writing in the first instance. If you remain dissatisfied and would like to request an internal review, then please contact us at the address above or by emailing foi@phe.gov.uk.

Please note that you have the right to an independent review by the Information Commissioner's Office if a complaint cannot be resolved through the PHE complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner's Office can be contacted by writing to Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely,
FOI Team