



Home Office

Digital, Data and Technology  
Health Measures at the Border  
Lunar House  
Croydon  
**CR9 2BY**  
[www.gov.uk/home-office](http://www.gov.uk/home-office)

Sumsi Timonda  
Via Email to: request-622788-  
3dbd8b89@whatdotheyknow.com

9 November 2020

Dear Sumsi Timonda,

**Freedom of Information Act 2000 Request (Our Reference 60735)**

Thank you for your e-mail of 12 October 2020. A full copy of your request can be found in **Annex A**. Your request has been handled as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

**In response to question one, I confirm that:**

The current policy is that Advance Passenger Information (API) is retained for 10 years; that information older than 10 years is automatically deleted and that requirements to use API older than 5 years are subject to additional access controls and approval. All requirements to use API, of whatever age, must be necessary, proportionate and made on a case-by-case basis with valid reason. API may be used to resolve queries relating to visa applications and issuing decisions, however this would be dependent on the specific details of the request.

**In response to question two, I confirm that:**

Access to all API is restricted and reason-based. Data older than 5 years is restricted further, and its use requires a higher level of approval.

**In response to question three, I confirm that:**

There are no scenarios in which API is routinely accessed. All requirements to use API, of whatever age, must be necessary, proportionate and made on a case-by-case basis with valid reason.

If you are dissatisfied with this response you may request an independent internal review of our handling of your request by submitting a complaint within two months to [foirequests@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:foirequests@homeoffice.gov.uk), quoting reference **60735**. If you ask for an internal review, it would be helpful if you could say why you are dissatisfied with the response.

As part of any internal review the Department's handling of your information request would be reassessed by staff who were not involved in providing you with this response. If you were to remain dissatisfied after an internal review, you would have a right of complaint to the Information Commissioner as established by section 50 of the FOIA.

Yours sincerely,

Digital Services at the Border

Email: [foirequests@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:foirequests@homeoffice.gov.uk)

## Annex A

From: Sumsi Timonda <request-622788-3dbd8b89@whatdotheyknow.com>  
Sent: 12 October 2020 10:48  
To: FOI Requests <FOIRequests@homeoffice.gov.uk>  
Subject: 60735 - Re: Freedom of Information request - API Records

Dear Home Office,

Thank you for your internal review.

I wish to make another FOIR and intend to make this this my final request related to API and Semaphore.

1) "Obtaining data older than five years is currently against data protection legislation unless it is specifically for a visa related query."  
(<https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.theyworkforyou.com%2Fwrans%2F%3Fid%3D2015-02-09.223901.h&data=02%7C01%7C%7C45d59cefccef41ef9bd908d86e9f02b9%7Cf24d93ecb2914192a08af182245945c2%7C0%7C0%7C637380976499940742&sdata=KGosqPzy7Vnz6Q37L1IGnmb2uLRMvR3sahIqiono0S8%3D&reserved=0>) What is meant by "a visa related query" and is this policy still current?

2) Is access to data older than five years, when it becomes subject to further access controls, reason based or role-based, i.e. do all results for "a visa related query" include data older than five years or is authorisation from a specific role-based user required before this data may be accessed?

3) If possible, please share the Home Office's policy showing the scenarios where data older than five years are routinely accessed.

Yours faithfully,

Sumsi Timonda