

Response issued under the Freedom of Information Act 2000

Our Reference: CQC IAT 2021 0181

Date of Response: 5 August 2020

Information Requested:

“I would like to know how many CQC inspectors have been accused of bribery and or corruption and or blackmail in the past 3 years.

I would like to know how many CQC inspectors have been investigated by the CQC for bribery and or corruption and or blackmail in the past 3 years.

I would like to know how many CQC inspectors have been dismissed as a result of being found guilty of misconduct in office based on findings of bribery and or corruption and or blackmail in the past 3 years.

I would like to know how many CQC inspectors have been prosecuted as a result if being dismissed for bribery and or corruption and or blackmail in the past 3 years.”

The Information Access team has now coordinated a response to your request.

CQC has considered your request in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

Our first obligation under the legislation is to confirm whether we do or do not hold the requested information.

In accordance with section 1(1) of FOIA we are able to confirm that CQC does hold recorded information in relation to this matter.

There have been a total of 20 reports within the last 3 years that have been reported to us and contain allegations of corruption or allegations of bribery relating to inspectors or members of an inspection team.

12 of these allegations relate to ‘corruption’ whereby we have received a complaint that the inspector has an inappropriate friendship or relationship with an individual at the service and is using that relationship to share information that they should not or influence or change the outcome of inspections.

8 of the allegations made related to bribery/blackmail.

We found no evidence in any of these cases to support the allegations being made so there has been no disciplinary action taken or dismissals and no prosecutions made as a result of these allegations.

For clarity, most of the allegations of corruption were received as part of larger complaints and were not the focus of the initial contact. Any instance whereby any potential conflict of interest is mentioned, we are passed the details and conducted a full investigation.

Again, the allegations of bribery are usually part of a larger complaint about an inspection that may include a reference to the fact that the inspector 'must be on the take' or 'must be on the payroll of the service' because the complainant does not agree with the outcome of the inspection. Again, because bribery is referenced in these complaints all are fully investigated as an allegation of bribery.

The Freedom of Information Act 2000

The purpose of FOIA is to ensure transparency and accountability in the public sector. It seeks to achieve this by providing anyone, anywhere in the world, with the right to access recorded information held by, or on behalf of, a public authority.

Recorded information includes printed documents, computer files, letters, emails, photographs, and sound or video recordings.

Public authorities spend money collected from taxpayers and make decisions that can significantly affect many people's lives. Access to information helps the public make public authorities accountable for their actions and allows public debate to be better informed and more productive.

The main principle behind FOIA is that people have a right to know about the activities of public authorities, unless there is a good reason for them not to.

A disclosure under FOIA is described as "applicant blind" meaning that it is a disclosure into the public domain, not to any one individual.

This means that everyone has a right to access official information. Disclosure should be the default – in other words, information should be kept private only when there is a good reason and it is permitted by FOIA.

An applicant does not need to give a reason for wanting the information. On the contrary, the public authority must justify refusing the information.

Public authorities are required to treat all requests equally, except under some limited circumstances. The information someone can access under FOIA should

not be affected by who they are, whether they are journalists, local residents, public authority employees, or foreign researchers.

CQC Complaints and Internal Review procedure

If you are not satisfied with our handling of your request, then you may request an internal review.

Please clearly indicate that you wish for a review to be conducted and state the reason(s) for requesting the review.

Please note that it is usual practice to accept a request for an internal review within 40 working days from the date of this response. The [FOIA code of practice](#) advises that public authorities are not obliged to accept internal reviews after this date.

Please be aware that the review process will focus upon our handling of your request and whether CQC have complied with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The internal review process should not be used to raise concerns about the provision of care or the internal processes of other CQC functions.

If you are unhappy with other aspects of the CQC's actions, or of the actions of registered providers, please see our website for information on how to raise a concern or complaint:

www.cqc.org.uk/contact-us

To request a review please contact:

E-mail: information.access@cqc.org.uk

Further rights of appeal exist to the Information Commissioner's Office under section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 once the internal appeals process has been exhausted.

The contact details are:

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

Telephone: 0303 123 1113

Website: www.ico.org.uk