



Department of Health & Social Care

Freedom of Information Team
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0EU

www.gov.uk/dhsc

Ms Louise Bicknell

By email to: request-926107-4567e1c6@whatdotheyknow.com

28 December 2022

Dear Ms Bicknell,

Freedom of Information Request Reference FOI-1429069

Thank you for your request dated 5 December to the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), a copy of which can be found in the accompanying annex.

Your request has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

DHSC holds information relevant to your request.

We have interpreted this request to be about the end of shielding [Letter to patients - end of the shielding programme \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk).

Please find attached a redacted copy of the submission which went to Ministers on 23 July 2021 'OFFSEN Submission on the future of shielding – redacted'. The submission contains the medical advice from Dr Jenny Harries and Professor Jonatan Van Tam, both then Deputy Chief Medical Officers, regarding the cancellation of shielding and that patients should receive advice from their clinicians.

Please note that some of this information has been redacted under Section 40(2) of the FOIA, which provides for the protection of personal information. Section 40 prohibits a public body from disclosing personally identifiable information, as doing so would contravene data protection principles.

Some of the information in this has also been redacted under sections 35.

Section 35(1)(a) of the FOIA provides protection for the information that relates to the formulation or development of government policy. Section 35 is a qualified exemption and requires consideration of the public interest test.

DHSC recognises the general public interest in making this information available for the sake of greater transparency and openness.

However, DHSC takes the view that the section 35 exemption is intended to ensure that the possibility of public exposure does not deter from full, candid and proper deliberation of policy formulation and development, including the exploration of all options.

Civil servants and subject experts need to be able to engage in the free and frank discussion of all the policy options internally, to expose their merits and demerits and their possible implications as appropriate. Their candour in doing so will be affected by their

assessment of whether the content of such discussion will be disclosed. Premature disclosure of information protected under section 35 could prejudice good working relationships and the neutrality of civil servants.

If you are not satisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to appeal by asking for an internal review. This should be sent to freedomofinformation@dhsc.gov.uk or to the address at the top of this letter and be submitted within two months of the date of this letter.

Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communication.

If you are not content with the outcome of your internal review, you may complain directly to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have already appealed our original response and received our internal review decision. You should raise your concerns with the ICO within three months of your last meaningful contact with us.

Guidance on contacting the ICO can be found at <https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us> and information about making a complaint can be found at <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint>.

Yours sincerely,

Freedom of Information Team
freedomofinformation@dhsc.gov.uk

Annex

-----Original Message-----

From: Louise Bicknell request-926107-4567e1c6@whatdotheyknow.com

Sent: 04 December 2022 16:36

To: FreedomofInformation freedomofinformation@dhsc.gov.uk

Subject: Freedom of Information request - Changes to the shielding policy

Dear Department of Health and Social Care,

On 27 September 2021 Sajid Javed wrote to my husband by email changing the shielding policy for the clinically extremely vulnerable.

Please provide me with the briefing paper that was a provided to the Secretary of State to explain the rationale and background for sending this email.

Yours faithfully,

Louise Bicknell

Please use this email address for all replies to this request:
request-926107-4567e1c6@whatdotheyknow.com