



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

Mr Abdul Hai
[request-653978-917c438b@whatdotheyknow.com](#)

9 April 2020

Dear Mr Hai,

Freedom of Information Request Reference FOI-1209041

Thank you for your request dated 10 March 2020 in which you asked the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC):

Subject: Freedom of Information request - Coronavirus disinformation unit

Dear Department of Health and Social Care,

Can you tell me how many members of staff does this team have?

What is the budget?

Can I have any reports produced by that team?

If you need anything clarified here is a article on the unit. <https://www.cityam.com/new-government-cyber-unit-to-grill-social-media-firms-over-coronavirus-fake-news/>

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

I can neither confirm nor deny that DHSC holds information relevant to your request.

Section 12(2) of the FOIA means public authorities are not obliged to comply with a request for information if it estimates the cost of complying would exceed the appropriate limit. The appropriate limit for DHSC is set at £600, which represents the cost of one person spending 3.5 days determining whether we hold the information.

It may help if I explain that processing your request would require that many individuals in teams and offices across the Department search their records and review a very large volume of documentation relating to Covid-19 in order to determine if any relevant information is held, which we have assessed would significantly exceed the section 12 limit.

If you were to refine your request by narrowing it to only one office/team within the Department, and by identifying a timeframe and keywords, then we may be able to process it. However, we cannot guarantee that Section 12 or any other exemptions will not apply to a reframed request. Please also bear in mind the restrictions on the service we can offer at this time because of the Department's frontline Covid-19 work.

Outside of the scope of the FOIA, you may be interested to know that the Counter Disinformation Unit is led by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), and if you should wish to direct your request to that department, FOI requests can be submitted to the DCMS at foi@culture.gov.uk.

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 submitted within two months of the date of this letter and sent to FreedomOfInformation@dhsc.gov.uk, or to the address at the top 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.

The ICO can be contacted at:

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

<https://ico.org.uk/concerns/>

Yours sincerely,

Dorothy Crowe

Freedom of Information Officer
E: freedomofinformation@dhsc.gov.uk