



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 Richard Willmott
request-674710-94dc8c92@whatdotheyknow.com

3 August 2020

Dear Mr Willmott,

Freedom of Information Request Reference FOI-1238029

Thank you for your request dated 6 July, in which you asked the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC):

*“Dear Department of Health and Social Care,
Can you please provide details of the due diligence undertaken on the financial and technical suitability of Aventis Solutions Ltd as a potential PPE supplier, prior to the contract awarded under notice 2020/S 126 -309296 in the sum of £18,480,000. The latest accounts of Aventis Solutions show it as having assets of just £322 and no experience of providing equipment to the DHSC. On the face of it it would not be an appropriate company with which to place a contract for £18m. Can you also please provide copies of emails, correspondence, transcripts of phone calls between Aventis Solutions Ltd, and the DHSC and also copies of internal communications between NHS Supply Chain and the DHSC on the matter of the contract in question.
I look forward to hearing from you.”*

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

DHSC holds the information you have requested. However, to comply with your request as it is currently framed would exceed the cost limit as set out in Section 12(1) of the FOIA. Section 12(1) states that a public authority can refuse a request if complying with it would exceed the appropriate limit of £600, which represents 3.5 working days. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending this time in determining whether the information is held, and locating, retrieving and extracting the information.

In consideration as to whether a supplier and a product is added to the supply chain, a range of factors are taken into account including their financial standing, compliance with minimum product specifications and ability to perform the contract. To determine this, various directorates within the DHSC will work with other Government Departments such as the Cabinet Office and then with the supplier. As such, this involves many items of correspondence and emails between all the various parties. Processing your request would therefore require that many individuals in several teams and offices search their records and review a large volume of documentation in order to locate and extract the relevant information. We have calculated that this would exceed the section 12 threshold.

If you were to refine your request, then we may be able to process it. You may consider narrowing it to for example to documents relating to financial standing work undertaken. However, we cannot guarantee that Section 12 or any other exemptions will not apply to a reframed request.

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,

Lauren Der
Freedom of Information Officer
FreedomOfInformation@dhsc.gov.uk