

DWP Policy Group Freedom of Information Team

e-mail: [freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

Our Ref: FOI2019/05963

25 February 2019

Dear Trevor Price,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (Fol) request received on 11 February. You asked:

- 1) *That the Department for Works and Pensions has set-up a Behavioural Science Unit (BSU)*
- 2) *The date the BSU was set-up on?*
- 3) *How many staff work within the BSU?*
- 4) *if any external companies or organisations have been involved in the BSU, the name of the companies or organisations involved and in what capacity?*

#### **DWP Response:**

The Freedom of Information Act gives you a legal right of access to any recorded information held by a public authority. We do not have to provide opinions or explanations, generate answers to questions, or create or obtain information we do not hold. If you ask a question, rather than requesting recorded information, we will provide you with the recorded information that best answers the question. Once we have provided the recorded information, we have met our obligations under the Act; interpreting the information provided is up to you.

The scale of the request is very broad. As such, we estimate that the cost of complying with your request would exceed the appropriate limit of £600. The appropriate limit has been specified in regulations and for central Government it is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 3½ working days in determining whether the Department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting the information.

Under section 16 of the Act we should help you narrow your request so that it may fall beneath the cost limit.

We could answer your questions 1 to 3 within the cost limit, but to provide a response to your question 4 would exceed the cost limit. Therefore, you may wish to consider removing, narrowing, or refocusing that element of your request, perhaps by specifying what you mean by “...*have been involved in the BSU...*”. The Behavioural Science team has interacted with a large number of organisations and individuals, both internal and external to government, since its foundation. We will consider afresh any revised request including a revised question 4, however we cannot guarantee that any revised request will fall within the cost limit.

Guidance from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) makes it clear that, as a matter of good practice, public authorities should avoid providing information found and citing section 12 for the remainder of the information. Although the ICO accepts that public authorities could do that with the intention of being helpful, the guidance is clear that it would ultimately deny you the right to express a preference as to which part or parts of the request you may wish to receive which can be provided under the appropriate limit. The Act does not require us to provide any information at all if section 12 is engaged in respect of any element of the request.

If you have any queries about this letter please contact me quoting the reference number above.

Yours sincerely,

DWP Policy Group Fol Team

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**Your right to complain under the Freedom of Information Act**

If you are not happy with this response you may request an internal review by e-mailing [freedom-of-information-request@dwpgsi.gov.uk](mailto:freedom-of-information-request@dwpgsi.gov.uk) or by writing to DWP, Central Fol Team, Caxton House, Tothill Street, SW1H 9NA. Any review request should be submitted within two months of the date of this letter.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office for a decision. Generally the Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted our own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5AF [https://ico.org.uk/Global/contact\\_us](https://ico.org.uk/Global/contact_us) or telephone 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545745