



# Department of Health & Social Care

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

[www.gov.uk/dhsc](http://www.gov.uk/dhsc)

Ms Emma Youle  
[Request-689829-8557581e@whatdotheyknow.com](mailto:Request-689829-8557581e@whatdotheyknow.com)

5 October 2020

Dear Ms Youle,

## **Freedom of Information Request Reference FOI-1253546**

Thank you for your request dated 7 September, in which you asked the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC):

"I would like to receive information regarding the purchase of face masks by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC). Specifically, I would like to know:

- 1) *How many FFP2 masks were purchased by DHSC from March 1, 2020 to August 31, 2020? Please state the number of masks and the cost of purchasing these masks, i.e. 40 million masks for £40million;*
- 2) *How many of these FFP2 masks had ear-loop rather than head-loop fastenings?*
- 3) *How many of the FFP2 masks purchased by DHSC from March 1, 2020 to August 31, 2020 are in use/or have been used by the NHS?*
- 4) *Please provide a list of companies that supplied FFP2 masks to DHSC from March 1, 2020 to August 31, 2020; and*
- 5) *Please provide a list of companies that supplied FFP2 masks to DHSC from March 1, 2020 to August 31, 2020 and subsequently some/all of the masks have not been able to be used by the NHS."*

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

I can confirm that the Department may hold information relevant to your request. 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 Freedom of Information Act. 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 24 hours). 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.

Where Section 12 applies to one part of a request, we refuse all of the request as being over the cost limit, as advised by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

Over 175 contracts have been awarded to companies for the supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). The contract management process for each of these contracts in terms of assessing delivery of the PPE against the individual contract payment mechanism and whether quality checks have been done involves the exchange of many emails within the Department, with the supplier and other external bodies.

To establish the precise, accurate position on all these contracts to answer the second part of your question five at any one point in time ("*and subsequently some/all of the masks have not been able to be used by the NHS*") would require us to extract information from many documents for examination to provide the answer. Processing your request would therefore require that 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, which we have calculated would exceed the Section 12 threshold.

If you were to refine your request for information within more specific margins, for example, within a shorter timescale, then we may be able to continue processing your request. However, I cannot guarantee that Section 12 or any other exemptions will not apply to any information requested.

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](mailto: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 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,

Jane Spencer  
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