



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Central FOI Unit
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

Website: <https://www.gov.uk>

Jenna Corderoy
request-647080-4eb312c0@whatdotheyknow.com

5 August 2020

Dear Jenna Corderoy

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: FOI2020/02761

Thank you for your email of 9th April asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

My request relates to how the Department processes FOI requests, as well as the training it receives when handling FOI requests.

I would like to request the following information:

(1) Please provide all guidelines and related documents that are used when processing FOI requests. I expect this to include all guidelines and related documents that are used when refusing requests, as well as documents relating to updates on FOI case law.

(2) Please provide all FOI training materials that the Department holds. I expect this to include guidelines, briefings, and such documents, including presentation slides.

Please also provide the following information:

(3) Please indicate how frequently the Department trains its staff in relation to FOI. Please indicate who provides the FOI training, and please indicate when they held training sessions (in the past three calendar years). Please also provide copies of their training materials.

(4) If the FOI training is outsourced, please indicate who provides the FOI training, and please indicate when they held training sessions (in the past three calendar years). Please also provide copies of their training materials.

For parts one to four, I'd like the timeframe to be 1st March 2019 to the current day. With regards to part two, please narrow the location of the departmental training to London. I am interested in internal and external training.

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed the search for the information which you requested.

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request.

Please find attached the information that the FCO can release to you.

FOI training is provided for staff new to the FOI team when courses are available. FCO Staff attended external training courses with PDP in London most recently the Level 1 and 2 FOI, GDPR/FOI and EIR courses in November 2019 and January 2020.

Training materials were provided in hard copy by PDP. We do not have access to this material at the moment, however this material is owned by PDP, you may wish to contact PDP for this information here; Canterbury Court, Vassal, London SW9 6DE.

Some of the information in scope of your request has been withheld under sections 24(1) and 36(2) of the FOIA.

Section 24(1) relates to national security. It is a qualified exemption, which means that it is subject to a public interest test. We acknowledge the public interest in openness and transparency, but we consider that there is also a strong public interest in the FCO protecting national security. Having reviewed the requested material, we consider that its release would adversely impact on the UK's security. We have therefore concluded that the exemption applies and that, in this case, the public interest in withholding the material concerned outweighs that in its disclosure.

Sections 36(2)(b)(i)&(ii) and 36(2)(c) cover information which, if released, would prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs. It is the opinion of an FCO minister that, in this case, the disclosure of the information concerned would be likely to inhibit the free and frank provision of advice and the free and frank exchange of views when considering requests received under the FOIA. In addition it would be likely otherwise to prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs by adversely affecting our ability to handle FOI requests effectively, in line with our legal obligations. The latter would clearly not be in the public interest, so, whilst we acknowledge the public interest in understanding more about how the FCO handles FOI requests, we consider that, in this case, the public interest in withholding the information concerned outweighs that in its disclosure.

Some of the information you have requested is personal data relating to third parties, the disclosure of which would contravene one of the data protection principles. In such circumstances sections 40(2) and 40 (3A)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act apply. In this case, our view is that disclosure would breach the data protection principle that personal data should be processed lawfully, fairly and transparently. It is the fairness aspect of this principle, which, in our view, would be breached by disclosure. In such circumstances, s.40 confers an absolute exemption on disclosure. There is, therefore, no public interest test to apply.

The information supplied to you continues to be protected by the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. You are free to use it for your own purposes, including any non-

commercial research you are doing and for the purposes of news reporting. Any other re-use, for example commercial publication, would require the permission of the copyright holder. Most documents supplied by the FCO will have been produced by government officials and will be protected by Crown Copyright. To re-use Crown Copyright documents please consult the [Open Government Licence v3](#) on the National Archives website.

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If you would like a review of our decision, or if you wish to make a complaint, please write to the Central FOI Unit, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Room WH2.177, King Charles Street, London, SW1A 2AH. E-mail: foi-dpa.pmcs@fco.gov.uk. You have 40 working days to do so from the date of this letter.

You can apply directly to the Information Commissioner. However, the Information Commissioner will not normally make a decision unless you have first exhausted the complaints procedure provided by the FCO. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely,

Central FOI Unit



For information about how the FCO handles personal information please see our [Personal Information Charter](#)