



Department of Health & Social Care

Freedom of Information Team
Department of Health and
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Mr Kane Marcus
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12 January 2018

Dear Mr Marcus

Freedom of Information Request Reference FOI-1110795

Thank you for your request dated 12 December 2017 in which you asked the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC):

“FOI request: report on corporate governance of NHS SBS by DoH Internal Audit Team

I refer to the Written Answer of Nicola Blackwood MP dated 10 March 2017 to Commons Written Question 66335 NHS Shared Business Services: Postal Services (Jonathan Ashworth MP). In this context, Ms Blackwood mentioned an investigation by the Department of Health's Internal Audit Team which considered the corporate governance of NHS SBS.

I would like to request access to the report of this investigation. If there was one or several interim or partial reports besides the final report, please provide access to all. Please provide annexes or appendices if applicable.”

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

I can confirm that the Department holds the information you requested regarding an audit review conducted by its Internal Audit Team on its governance arrangements surrounding NHS Shared Business Services.

We have discussed this matter with our internal auditors, Health Group Internal Audit (HGIA), part of the Government Internal Audit Agency, and have decided to exempt the requested information under section 33 (2) of the Freedom of Information Act. Disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to, prejudice our audit function. Divulging details of audit reports could discourage co-operation with auditors in the future and have an adverse impact on the audit function's ability to fulfil responsibilities to the Department.

Whilst there is a public interest in there being public accountability for the governance of public bodies over their commercial holdings, this is outweighed by the public interest in the Department being able to receive unprejudiced reports from HGIA. In particular, such reports

are vital in maintaining the public interest of the Department having appropriate governance of its commercial holdings. As such, the public interest test for releasing this information is not met in this case.

You may be aware that the investigation into the NHS Shared Business Services mail redirection incident by the National Audit Office has already been published, and is available here:

<https://www.nao.org.uk/report/investigation-clinical-correspondence-handling-at-nhs-shared-business-services/>

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 receipt of the response to your original letter and should be addressed to the address at the top of this letter, or the email address at the end of this letter.

Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are not content with the outcome of your internal review, you may complain directly to the Information Commissioner (ICO) who may decide to investigate your concerns. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have already appealed our original response, and received our internal review response. The ICO will not usually investigate concerns where there has been an undue delay in bringing it to their attention. You should raise your concerns with them 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

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