



Cabinet Office

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London, SW1A 2AS

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

Rowland Manthorpe

By email: [request-675860-0b9749d9@whatdotheyknow.com](mailto:request-675860-0b9749d9@whatdotheyknow.com)

FOI Reference: FOI2020/09513  
29 September 2020

Dear Rowland Manthorpe

We refer to your request where you asked:

*“Under the Freedom of Information Act, can I please have copies of the overnight focus group research sent by Hanbury Strategy and Public First to Downing Street between February 1 and the present date.*

*If this is not possible, you have a duty to advise me how I can rephrase my request in a way that allows you to fulfil it.”*

I apologise for the delay in responding to your request. I am writing to advise you that following a search of our paper and electronic records, I have established that the information you requested is held by the Cabinet Office.

This information informs the government’s communication response to coronavirus. It is therefore related to the government’s ongoing, evolving policy stance on the matter and is being withheld under Section 35(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 35(1)(a) covers information relating to the formulation or development of government policy.

Section 35 is a qualified exemption and I have considered whether the balance of the public interest favours maintaining the exemption under section 35(1)(a). There is a general public interest in the Government being open and transparent. I also recognise

that the government's policy stance on the coronavirus pandemic has a significant impact on the lives of citizens and that there are public interests in transparency here.

These public interests have to be weighed against a strong public interest that policy-making and its implementation are of the highest quality. How the government communicates with the public around the coronavirus pandemic is an inherent component of the Government's overall policy stance on the matter. Disclosing information relating to the development and implementation of that stance prematurely could damage future policy making and prevent good government.

After weighing up the competing public interest considerations, we consider it is reasonable in all the circumstances that the information held should be withheld in the interests of good government and to preserve a safe space for the development and implementation of policy.

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request or wish to request an internal review, you should write to:

Eirian Walsh Atkins  
Cabinet Office  
70 Whitehall  
London  
SW1A 2AS

email: [foi-team@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:foi-team@cabinetoffice.gov.uk)

You should note that the Cabinet Office will not normally accept an application for internal review if it is received more than two months after the date that the reply was issued.

If you are not content with the outcome of your internal review, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by the Cabinet Office. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

The Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. B. Ken', written in a cursive style.

FOI Team  
Cabinet Office