



Cabinet Office

Room 401
70 Whitehall
London, SW1A 2AS

foi-team@cabinetoffice.gov.uk
www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk

David Glover

By email: request-729386-caba36c9@whatdotheyknow.com

FOI Reference: FOI2021/03668

16 March 2021

Dear David Glover

We refer to your request where you asked:

“Has the government paid or offered benefit in kind to any celebrity, journalist or media company to promote or campaign for it's covid 19 policies?”

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.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government has launched a national public information campaign providing information, guidance and reassurance to the general public.

The purpose of advertising payments has been to ensure that we deliver a national priority communications campaign that keeps the general public informed about the COVID-19 pandemic. These advertisements are designed to inform the public of the Government's actions through clear, simple messaging delivered via trusted voices and channels and as much as possible, signalling what might be coming next and when. All communications activity including broadcast is simplified, amplified locally and targeted across social and digital media.

The Government possesses a variety of media channels that are essential for communication with the public. We book a variety of advertising assets from media owners, in line with campaign objectives and to maximise reach. We have been directing

businesses towards support available to them and safer workplace guidance on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) through paid, owned and earned media channels throughout the COVID crisis and will continue to do so as long as required.

The Government works with a number of suppliers to deliver its communication campaigns, and has done so for decades. The Cabinet Office now publishes details of spend over £500, including on public information campaigns, on a rolling basis. This will include expenditure on this campaign and will be broken down by supplier. The Cabinet Office is consistently tracking and reviewing spending on the campaign to ensure efficiency and that the appropriate communications strategy is implemented. We will not spend more than we need to for the campaign to be effective.

At every stage of this pandemic, we have utilised scientific and medical experts to communicate clear information to the public. The majority of the influencers that work with the Government are not paid for their time, as they recognise the importance of communicating health guidance on Covid-19. On occasion, to ensure all of our target audiences are reached in key channels they engage with, influencers are paid for their time to produce content.

The Cabinet Office publishes spend data monthly on a rolling basis as part of routine government transparency. This data provides details of Cabinet Office spend over £25,000 since 1 April 2010. I attach a link to this webpage here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cabinet-office-spend-data> This is broken down by supplier.

Therefore, the information you have requested is being withheld as it is exempt under Section 21(1) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 21 exempts information if this information is reasonably accessible to the applicant by other means. Section 21 is an absolute exemption and the Cabinet Office is not required to consider whether the public interest favours disclosure of this information.

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:

Rachel Anderson
Head of Freedom of Information
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2AS

email: 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 dark ink, appearing to be 'J. B. K.', is written over a light grey rectangular background.

FOI Team
Cabinet Office