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Dr Karen McCullagh;  
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04 April 2022

Our reference: FOI 300322/046

**RE: Request for information under Freedom of Information (FOI) Act on the Impact of COVID-19 on FOI responsiveness**

Dear Dr McCullagh,

Thank you for your recent Freedom of Information request submitted via email to Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJI) on 30 March 2022.

Our understanding of the information you have requested is as follows:

- I. For the period 16th March – 17th July 2020 (i.e., when ICO had indicated a sympathetic approach to delay), provide precise data if available e.g., 15 out of 30 requests, and if not, provide an estimate e.g., 10%, for these questions:
  - (a) how many responses to FOI requests were issued within 20 working days of receipt by your organisation?
  - (b) how many responses to FOI review requests were issued within 20 working days of receipt of the request for an internal review?
  - (c) how many responses to FOI requests were issued within 21 and 60 working days of receipt by your organisation?
  - (d) how many responses to FOI review requests were issued within 21 and 60 working days of receipt of the request for an internal review?

2. For the period 18th July – 8th October 2020 (i.e., during the ‘preparing for recovery’ phase), provide precise data if available e.g., 15 out of 30 requests, and if not, provide an estimate e.g., 10%, for these questions:
  - (a) how many responses to FOI requests were issued within 20 working days of receipt by your organisation?
  - (b) how many responses to FOI review requests were issued within 20 working days of receipt of the request for an internal review?
  - (c) how many responses to FOI requests were issued within 21 and 60 working days of receipt by your organisation?
  - (d) how many responses to FOI review requests were issued within 21 and 60 working days of receipt of the request for an internal review?
3. During the period 1st March to 30th October 2020, provide precise data if available e.g., 15 out of 30 requests, and if not, provide an estimate e.g., 10%, for these questions:
  - (a) how many responses to FOI requests were issued more than 60 working days after receipt of the request?
  - (b) how many responses to FOI review requests were issued more than 60 working days after receipt of a request for an internal review?
4. When FOI request or review responses were issued more than 21 working days after receipt during the period 1st March and 30th October 2020, what were the main reasons for the delay? e.g., closure of premises due to Covid-19, reallocation of resources due to Covid-19, staff shortages due to Covid-19, absence of key staff due to Covid-19, limited access to necessary systems due to Covid-19, other issue related/unrelated to Covid19.
5. In relation to the FOI requests received by your organisation between 1st March and 30th October 2020, what proportion related directly to Covid-19, your organisation's Covid-19 response or impact of the pandemic on your organisation? (Provide precise data if available e.g., 15 out of 30 requests, and if not, provide an estimate e.g., 10%)
6. On 17th July 2020 the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) launched a self-assessment Freedom of Information toolkit (FOI self-assessment toolkit | ICO) to help public authorities respond to FOI requests as they prepared to recover from the coronavirus pandemic.
  - Does, or has your organisation ever, use/d the toolkit? If so, please explain whether it has it had any positive outcomes.
  - If your organisation has not/does not make use of the toolkit, please explain why not.
7. In response to Covid19, has the volume of information your organisation publishes:
  - not changed
  - significantly increased
  - significantly decreased
  - don’t know

8. Has your organisation taken steps to proactively publish information relating to Covid-19, your organisation's Covid-19 response or the impact of the pandemic on your organisation? If it includes a dedicated webpage, please provide a link to the webpage.

In response to your request, I can confirm the information below is being released in reply to your request.

**Question 1**

CJI did not receive any requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act between 16 March and 17 July 2020.

**Question 2**

Between the period 18 July 2020 and 8 October 2020 CJI received one request for information under the Freedom of Information Act. This request was responded to within 20 working days. The request was internally reviewed prior to issue within 20 working days.

**Question 3**

During the period 1 March to 30 October 2020 no responses to Freedom of Information requests were issued more than 60 working days after receipt of the request or issued more than 60 working days after receipt of a request for an internal review.

**Question 4**

During the period 1 March to 30 October 2020 no responses to Freedom of Information requests were issued more than 21 working days after receipt.

**Question 5**

In relation to the Freedom of Information requests received by CJI between 1 March and 30 October 2020, no requests related directly to Covid-19, CJI's Covid-19 response or impact of the pandemic on CJI.

**Question 6**

CJI has not used the self-assessment Freedom of Information Toolkit launched by the Information Commissioners Office on 17 July 2020 to help public authorities respond to Freedom of Information Requests as they prepared to recover from the Coronavirus pandemic. CJI has not used the toolkit as its ability to respond to Freedom of Information requests has not changed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Question 7**

In response to COVID-19 the volume of information published by CJI has not changed.

**Question 8**

CJI has proactively published information relating to COVID-19 and CJI's response to and the impact of the pandemic on the Inspectorate in its 2020-23 Corporate Plan and 2020-2021 Business Plan; its 2021-22 Business Plan, its 2019-20 Annual Report and Accounts, its 2020-21 Annual Report and Accounts; its Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Minutes from April 2020 onwards and in Minutes of its Senior Management Team Meetings where applicable from March 2020. Copies of these documents can be found on the CJI website – [www.cjini.org](http://www.cjini.org).

I hope this information satisfies your request. Should this not satisfy your request for information, please contact in the first instance CJI's Freedom of Information Officer.

Their address is Freedom of Information Officer, Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland, Block I, Knockview Buildings, Belfast, BT4 3SJ or email [info@cjini.org](mailto:info@cjini.org).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Corrigan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

James Corrigan  
**Chief Executive**  
**Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland**