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Department of the
Environment

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**DOE HR & Organisational Change
Division**

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Mr Paddy Dignam

request-135738-
43ab6b32@whatdotheyknow.com

Telephone: 028 9054 0788

Email: gavin.dunleavy@doeni.gov.uk

Your
reference:
Our DO2-12-505
reference:

Date: 26 November 2012

Dear Mr Dignam

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000

I refer to your request of 29 October 2012 for information relating to Grievance, Dignity at Work and Disciplinary cases.

I will respond to your request for information in the order requested. Please note this response is solely on behalf of the Department of Environment.

1. The total number of:

- (a) Grievances raised
- (b) Dignity at work complaints raised
- (c) Disciplinary investigations launched in the Department in each of the last 5 years.

The following table provides a breakdown of the number of cases per financial year and has been provided by HRConnect. I would advise that HRConnect has the responsibility for the provision of HR services following centralisation of Departmental HR Services in March 2008.

Year	Grievances cases	Dignity at Work cases	Disciplinary cases
2007/08	2	5	5
2008/09	27	14	20
2009/10	11	11	17
2010/11	15	5	6
2011/12	13	8	6
2012/13	19	5	16
Total	87	48	70

2. The date of initiation of each

- (a) Grievances raised**
- (b) Dignity at work complaints raised**
- (c) Disciplinary investigations launched in the Department in each of the last 5 years.**

I would advise that this information has also been provided by HRConnect. However, on validation of the information provided the Department has discovered a number of anomalies in relation to the timelines. Clarification has been sought from HRConnect and we will provide a response by 7 December 2012. This also applies to Questions 3 and 4 detailed below.

3. The date each case was concluded (including information on the number and timing of appeals heard).

4. The outcome of each case.

5. The reasons why

- (a) any Grievance case was not dealt with within 28 days**
- (b) any Dignity at Work case was not dealt with within 3 months**
- (c) any Disciplinary investigation was not dealt with within 3 months**

Upon receipt of a written grievance the Department will try to deal with this within 28 days, however such complaints, by their very nature, are quite complex and may involve a number of witnesses and as such delays can occur due to the availability of representatives.

The Department will also attempt to deal with Dignity at Work and Disciplinary as quickly and efficiently as possible, however in many instances there are a number of factors such as the complexity of the complaint, the need for thorough and careful review of the complaint which can contribute to the time taken in dealing with cases satisfactorily.

6. Any policies, procedures and strategies to monitor the performance of each case progression, manage resources to progress cases, and action taken to improve performance.

Please note the following policies and procedures are in place:

Customer Opinion Survey (COS), which seeks feedback from NICS Decision Officers on both case progression and quality of the Investigation Reports are produced by HRConnect.

Escalation Process which monitors turnaround times for all Employee Relations cases (Grievance, Dignity at Work & Discipline) from initiation of the case until it is closed.

A monthly 10% Quality Assurance check on 'closed' Employee Relations cases from a quality perspective to monitor the quality of the Investigation Reports being produced by HRConnect.

Annual Internal Audit by HRConnect on Employee Relations cases to ensure proper procedures have been followed.

Bi-yearly Investigation Report Forum which focuses on the quality of Investigation Reports produced by HRConnect and best practices across Departments for handling / progressing Employee Relations cases.

Under the terms of the legislation, if you are unhappy with this response you have the right to seek a review by the Department in the first instance, within two calendar months of the date of this letter. If you wish to do so, please write to

Departmental Information Manager
Room 6.20
Department of the Environment
Clarence Court
Adelaide Street
Belfast BT2 8GB

If after such a review you are still unhappy with the response, you have the right to appeal to the Information Commissioner who will undertake an independent review.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely

pp. *M. McLaughlin*

Laura Connolly
DOE HR