



Ms S Graber
By email: Request-318877-
6ed51dac@whatdotheyknow.com

www.hmrc.gov.uk

Date March 2016
Our ref FOI 1380/16

Dear Ms Graber

I am writing regarding your recent request for information which was received on 29th February 2016. You asked for the following information:

- 1. How many debt collection agencies have you contracted with each year from year commencing April 2011 to year commencing April 2015 to recover alleged tax credit debts more than six years old? What are the names of these companies?***
- 2. Do you pay the organisations for work done where no money is recovered by them? If so, how much? Or, do you pay these organisations on successful recovery only? If so, please confirm details of this agreement.***
- 3. Do you provide the organisations with the dates of the alleged debts, or the sums involved only?***
- 4. How many alleged tax credit debts from 2004-2005 have you pursued between 2013 and 2015? How many of these debts have been the subject of court proceedings?***

I am answering under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)

I can confirm that HMRC holds some of the information that falls within the description specified in your request. However we estimate that the cost of complying with your request would exceed the appropriate limit of £600. This is because we would need to do a manual analysis of many thousands of cases to provide an answer to your fourth question.

The appropriate limit is specified in regulations and for central government is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 3 ½ working days determining if the department holds the information. This includes locating, retrieving and extracting the information.

Consequently under section 12(1) of the FOIA the department is not obliged to comply with your request and we will not be processing it further.

If you were to limit your request to information described in question 1 (the names of Debt Collection Agencies contracted since 2011) and question 3 (whether we provide them with the dates of debts) we may be able to provide some information.

In an effort to be helpful, outside the FOIA, I am providing (below) some information that may be of interest and that is already in the public domain.

With regard to your Q1 I can advise that our website already lists currently contracted Debt Collections Agencies (see www.gov.uk/if-you-don't-pay-your-tax-bill-debt-collection-agencies for details).

With regard to your question 2 I can advise that the debt collection agency contract pricing structure is for a percentage commission to be paid in respect of the amount of debt collected. We believe details about the specific terms of the contract are likely to be exempt as disclosure could harm the interests of HMRC and/or our commercial partners..

If you are not happy with this reply you may request a review by emailing foi.review@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk, or by post to HMRC FOI Team, Room 1C/23, 100 Parliament Street London SW1A 2BQ. You must request a review within 2 months of the date of this letter. It would help us carry out our review if you set out the aspects of the reply that concern you and why you are dissatisfied.

If you are not content with the outcome of an internal review, you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). The ICO will not usually consider a case unless you have exhausted the internal review procedure provided by HMRC. You can make a complaint through the ICO's website at: www.ico.org.uk, or by post to: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF.

Yours faithfully

Mrs K Newill
Senior Officer