

DWP Policy Group Freedom of Information Team

e-mail: freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Our Ref: FOI2019/02947

14 February 2019

Dear Angie Nickson,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (Fol) request received on 21 January. You asked:

Please could you send me the report mentioned in this article (<https://kittysjones.wordpress.com/2019/01/17/leaked-document-reveals-how-government-are-micromanaging-public-perceptions-of-governments-austerity-programme/>) about managing public perceptions of the government's austerity programme by Laura de Moliere, the Department for Work and Pension's lead behavioural scientist, and Catherine Hunt, Head of Insight and Evaluation at the Cabinet Office.

DWP Response:

I confirm that the Department holds the information you have requested but it is being withheld because it falls into the exemption at Section 36 (2) (b)(i) and (b)(ii) of the Freedom of Information Act which states

“(2) Information to which this section applies is exempt information if, in the reasonable opinion of a qualified person [in this context, a Minister of the Crown], disclosure of the information under this Act

(b) would, or would be likely to, inhibit—

(i) the free and frank provision of advice, or

(ii) the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation,”

This exemption requires the public interest for and against disclosure to be assessed.

We recognise that the publication of the information requested could provide a greater understanding of how the government develops and shapes its communication strategies.

However, we have to balance this against the fact that the withheld documentation includes details of a sensitive nature whose publication would be likely to inhibit candour and be likely to prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs.

There is a strong public interest in understanding how government develops and shapes its communication strategies.

There is also a strong public interest in senior communicators in the civil service being able to seek honest advice on the significant and challenging issues facing their profession, including unrestrained and candid contributions from business areas.

On balance, DWP is satisfied that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

If you have any queries about this letter please contact me quoting the reference number above.

Yours sincerely,

DWP Policy Group FoI Team

Your right to complain under the Freedom of Information Act

If you are not happy with this response you may request an internal review by e-mailing freedom-of-information-request@dwpgsi.gov.uk or by writing to DWP, Central FoI Team, Caxton House, Tothill Street, SW1H 9NA. Any review request should be submitted within two months of the date of this letter.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office for a decision. Generally the Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted our own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5AF https://ico.org.uk/Global/contact_us or telephone 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545745