

DWP Policy Group Freedom of Information Team

e-mail: [freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:freedom-of-information-request@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)

Our Ref: IR2019/10054

25 March 2019

Dear Angie Nickson,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (Fol) internal review request received on 8 March. You asked:

*I am writing to request an internal review of Department for Work and Pensions's handling of my FOI request 'Report by Moliere and Hunt'.*

*The public interest is overwhelming that it should be released. The Conservative Government is responsible for over 100,000 deaths due to their austerity policy  
<https://www.openaccessgovernment.org/landmark-austerity-report-links-policies-120000-deaths/39865/> and <https://nursingnotes.co.uk/austerity-estimated-200000-extra-deaths-over-ten-years/>*

*Instead of addressing these deaths and the reasons they have sought to manipulate public perception of the policy.*

*The staff were very senior staff that wrote the report, and no evidence has been produced that they had any expectation of privacy on this issue.*

*Furthermore please state who the who the minister of the crown is and he/she cannot be said to be free of bias considering that their government will be criticised on the deaths if the full facts are known. So he/she is just indulging in the politics of self preservation.*

*Over 100,000 deaths requires accountability not spin. It is overwhelming public interest to publish the report.*

*A full history of my FOI request and all correspondence is available on the Internet at this address: [https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/report\\_by\\_moliere\\_and\\_hunt](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/report_by_moliere_and_hunt)*

## **DWP Response:**

In response to your request, I can confirm that the handling of your original request and response has now been appropriately reviewed and that I was unconnected with the handling of your original request.

As a result of this review I am satisfied that the original response was handled properly and that the outcome of your request was correct. The reasoning behind this decision is as follows.

There is an overarching public interest in transparency in government, including in the public knowing what the government is doing on its behalf and with public funds. In this case there is a strong public interest in understanding how the government develops and shapes its communication strategies, particularly in relation to controversial areas of policy.

However, this needs to be weighed against the strong public interest in avoiding the harm or detriment that would be likely to result from release. My investigation into this case reveals that the report in question was intended to provide advice that would then act as the basis of wider discussions within the government communication profession about its future strategy. The authors did not expect their considerations to be circulated beyond the intended internal audience and expressed themselves freely and frankly for the purposes of deliberation. Any expectation that such documents would be shared in the public domain while discussions are ongoing would inhibit the frankness and candour of the advice offered and I am satisfied that it would therefore be likely to prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs.

On balance, I find that the public interest case for transparency is considerably outweighed by the public interest in avoiding the harm or detriment that would be likely to result from release. I therefore consider that Section 36(2) was properly engaged on this occasion.

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

Yours sincerely,

DWP Policy Group FoI Team

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**Your right to complain under the Freedom of Information Act**

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](https://ico.org.uk/Global/contact_us) or telephone 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545745