

**Finance Division
Room E5.20
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
BELFAST
BT4 3SR
Email: rff.feedback@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk**

Mr Brian Donaldson

**[request-704249-
8c421a8e@whatdotheyknow.com](mailto:request-704249-8c421a8e@whatdotheyknow.com)**

**Your Ref: Special Advisors Wage
Bill**

Our Ref: TEO / 2020 - 0086

Date: 18 December 2020

Dear Mr Donaldson

Freedom of Information Act 2000

I refer to your request which we received on 6 November 2020 for information relating to the wages bill for Special Advisors within The Executive Office (TEO). I wish to take this opportunity to apologise for the delay in this response.

TEO has now completed its search for this information and wish to advise you that some of this information cannot be disclosed.

A copy of the information which can be disclosed is provided in Annex A.

Some information you have requested is being withheld as it is exempt under section 22(1) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 22(1) protects information intended for future publication. Section 22 is a qualified exemption and I have considered whether the balance of the public interest favours maintaining the exemption in section 22(1) or disclosing the information. Some of the information requested will be published as soon as possible and will be accessible here:-

<https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dfp/List%20of%20Special%20Advisers.pdf>

The Department recognises there is a general public interest in disclosure and the fact that openness in government may increase public trust in and engagement with the government. However the planned release of checked and audited information in order to properly inform the public should not be prejudiced by premature release. In the light of this the balance of public interest is in favour of the temporary withholding of this information.

If you are unhappy with the level of service you have received in relation to our handling of this request, you may ask for an internal review within two calendar months of the date of this letter. You should contact –

Head of Executive and Central Advisory Division
Room SD 24
Stormont Castle
Stormont Estate
BELFAST
BT4 3ST

Tel - 028 90 378149
Email - foi@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk

In order to assist a thorough review, it would be helpful if you set out any particular grounds for complaint.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you then have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at –

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
WILMSLOW
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

The Information Commissioner will not investigate a complaint unless the internal review procedure outlined above has been completed.

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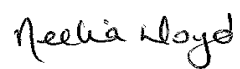
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<http://www.ipo.gov.uk/types/copy/c-other.htm>

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Neelia Lloyd". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of "Neelia" and "Lloyd" being capitalized and prominent.

Neelia Lloyd

TEO / 2020-0086

Request:

1. Can you confirm the Special advisor wages for both parties in 2019 and the projected wage forecast for 2020 and 2021?
2. A list of current special advisors and wages as well please.

Response:

In response to question 1, there were no Special Advisors in the financial year 2018/19.

The total projected salary cost for TEO Special Advisors is estimated to be £647,000 (including employer's national insurance and pension contributions) for 2020/21. We are unable to provide the projected salary cost for 2021/22 at this stage.

In response to question 2, there are currently 7 Special Advisors in post.