



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

21 May 2013

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0351-13

Thank you for your email dated 19 April asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

- 1) *How many freedom of information requests has the department received in each of the years since the Freedom of Information Act came into force?*
- 2) *In each of those years, how many of those requests were overdue?*
- 3) *In each of those years, how many members of staff have worked for the FOI team.*

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed the search for the information which you requested.

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request.

In answer to your questions one and two – in our view the information is already reasonably accessible to you. Under Section 21 of the Act, we are not required to provide information in response to a request if it is already reasonably accessible to the applicant. You can find the most up to date available statistics relating to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's handling of FOI requests in the Ministry of Justice quarterly and annual reports on the Freedom of Information Act 2000 Statistics on implementation in central government. The reports covering 2010-2012 are available on the Gov.uk website at this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/earlier-editions-statistics-on-implementation-in-central-government-earlier-editions-in-the-series>.

The above website provides a link to earlier editions in the series from 2005-2009 which are available through the national archives at this link:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110322191207/http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/freedomofinformationquarterly-archive.htm>

The statistics for the first quarter of 2013 will be published in June. Therefore, this information is exempt under section 22 of the FOIA – Information intended for future publication. The exemption under Section 22 of the Freedom of Information Act recognises that it must be reasonable in all the circumstances to withhold the information until the date of publication. The national statistics are published quarterly and provide a complete picture of how government departments handle FOI requests received in each quarter. This

provides a fair and objective basis on which to compare how government departments handle FOI requests. We believe that this timetable is reasonable.

Team structures within departments and directorates are fluid, responding to changing requirements, and the Information Rights Team is no exception to this. The number of job slots per team within a department is not centrally recorded. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office currently has a central FOI team made up of 11 members of staff who primarily cover FOI work. This team provides advice and guidance to FCO departments on FOI and carries out other related functions such as providing monitoring returns to the Ministry of Justice. The process of answering FOI requests is devolved to the departments.