

Dear [REDACTED]

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

Thank you for your email of the 5 November.

You asked for the following information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000:

- The number of policy officers employed by the Scotland Office with a responsibility for answering correspondence.

While the Scotland Office does not hold information that is specific to your request, I hope it helpful to explain how the department is structured to handle the different types of correspondence we receive.

It is important to note that the Scotland Office does not directly employ any staff. Instead staff are seconded or loaned by other Civil Service bodies. We do this to ensure we have the range of skills and experience needed to fulfil the Office's functions. You can view a copy of our most recent Annual Report setting out our functions and other corporate information at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/annual-report-and-accounts-2012-13--2>

A range of other transparency data is also available on our website at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications?departments%5B%5D=scotland-office&publication_type=transparency-data

The Scotland Office has no members of staff who deal exclusively with answering correspondence. Correspondence, which can include freedom of information requests, letters from members of the public and external organisations and ministerial correspondence within and between governments, is centrally recorded and then distributed to the relevant official.

Where that correspondence is about a government policy matter, the correspondence will be answered by the relevant policy official. Where it relates to corporate information for example, it will be answered by the relevant individual in our Corporate Services team. Correspondence is therefore an element of broader roles and can be answered by people of different grades. The Scotland Office does not disaggregate the time spent on answering correspondence. To do so would incur disproportionate cost. Correspondence is part and parcel of our engagement with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders and a critical way by which we and other government departments are held to account.

I hope you find this explanation useful. If you are dissatisfied with the decision made in relation to your request you may ask for an internal review. A request for an internal review should be addressed to:

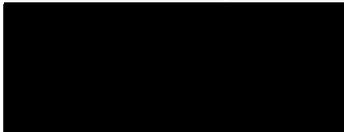
FOI Officer
1 Melville Crescent
EDINBURGH
EH3 7HW

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The contact details are:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
CHESHIRE
SK9 5AF

If you have any queries about this letter please contact me.

Yours sincerely



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**Deputy Director, Home, Social and Domestic Affairs
Scotland Office**