



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

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12 March 2015

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0111-15**

Thank you for your email of 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2015 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

*I am writing to request information under the Freedom of Information Act. Over the course of 2014, I would like to know how many sick days employees of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office took, and also the number of employees of the department on the last working day of 2014.*

*If the data is available, I would also like to know the following:*

- *The dates of all sick days taken*
- *Total cost of sickness absence for the department over the year*
- *Who took the sick days. If the identity cannot be given, I would like to know how many times each person took a sick day.*
- *The reasons given for sickness*

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.

The information you have requested is compiled and reported on a quarterly basis with the last complete set of data for the period up to 30 September 2014. We have therefore provided information for the period 1 October 2013 to 30 September 2014 on FCO UK based staff only. Sick absence for Locally Engaged staff overseas is not held centrally.

*How many sick days employees of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office took?*

The number of sick days taken in the year ending September 2014 is 15,274, by 4560 UK based staff. That equals to 3.3 Average Working Days Lost (compared to an average of 3.9 in 2013). The FCO figure remains lower than the average Civil Service wide figure of 6.3 days, which is at its lowest since 1999.

*The number of employees of the department on the last working day of 2014?*

The total number of FCO staff on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014 was 4578. For comparative purposes the total number of FCO staff on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2014 was 4560. This excludes locally engaged staff overseas.

*The dates of all sick days taken?*

Please see Annex.

*Total cost of sickness absence for the department over the year?*

The estimated cost of sick absence for the FCO for the period was £1.65 million.

*Who took the sick days? If the identity cannot be given, I would like to know how many times each person took a sick day?*

Some of the information you have requested, is personal data relating to third parties, the disclosure of which would contravene one of the data protection principles. In such circumstances sections 40(2) and (3) of the Freedom of Information Act apply. In this case, our view is that disclosure would breach the first data protection principle. This states that personal data should be processed fairly and lawfully. It is the fairness aspect of this principle, which, in our view, would be breached by disclosure. In such circumstances, s.40 confers an absolute exemption on disclosure. There is, therefore, no public interest test to apply.

Below is a list of the numbers of staff and the number of times they took time off sick (e.g. 777 members of staff only recorded 1 period of sick absence). Numbers of staff 5 or below have been amalgamated to prevent staff being identified. Approximately 70% of staff did not take any sick days at all.

Number of times staff took sick leave	Number of staff
0	3571
1	777
2	394
3	217
4	84
5	38

6	20
7	6
8 and above	15

*The reasons given for sickness?*

The various reasons given for sick absence were:

Absence Reason

Cancers inc. Leukaemia, Hodgkin's Disease  
Dental Problems  
Depression / Mental Illness  
Endocrine Disorders e.g. Diabetes, Thyroid  
Eye Disorders e.g. Conjunctivitis, Cataracts  
Gynaecological Disorders  
Heart Condition inc. Blood Pressure problems  
Infectious / Viral Illness e.g. Glandular Fever, Chickenpox  
Influenza, Colds, Throat and Ear Infections  
Injury both work and non work related  
Medical Investigations  
Menopause Related Illness  
Migraine  
Musculoskeletal / Back Pain  
Neurological Conditions e.g. Epilepsy, Parkinson's Disease  
Pregnancy Related Illness  
Respiratory Conditions inc. Asthma  
Skin Conditions e.g. Eczema, Psoriasis  
Stomach Disorder  
Stress Related  
Surgical Operations  
Tropical Diseases  
Urinary / Kidney Disorders

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Yours sincerely,

Human Resources Directorate



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