

Freedom of information request for the amount of funding and staff time given to trade unions

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to obtain information about the total amount of money paid to trade unions by DECC, the amount of staff time spent on trade union duties and / or activities and the payment of subscriptions.

To outline my query as clearly as possible, I am requesting:

1. The total amount of money paid to all trade unions for financial years a) 2010-11 and b) 2011-12. Where possible please provide a list of total payments made to each different trade union. However if this disaggregated information is not available please continue to provide a total figure for trade union payments. In response to this question, please only include direct payments to the unions from your organisation, not membership dues deducted from staff salaries.
2. Please state:
 1. Which trade unions your organisation provide staff time to work on trade union duties and / or activities (sometimes called 'Trade Union facility time') in i) 2010-11 and ii) 2011-12.
 3. The number of full time equivalent staff that were provided for each trade union in i) 2010-11 and ii) 2011-12.
4. Does your organisation automatically deduct trade union subscriptions from staff salaries in the payroll process in order to pass them on to the union? If so, how much did your organisation charge each union for this service in a) 2010-11 and b) 2011-12?

Please note that the guidelines issued by ACAS state that: *"An employee who is a member of an independent trade union recognised by the employer in respect of that description of employee is to be permitted reasonable time off during working hours to take part in any trade union activity. An employee who is a member of an independent and recognised trade union is also permitted to take reasonable time off during working hours for the purposes of accessing the services of a Union Learning Representative (provided those services are services for which the Union Learning Representative is entitled to time off)."*

If the information is not recorded, there is no way of ascertaining whether the time off provided is reasonable. I therefore do not expect the response that the organisation does not hold this information. If a formal record is not kept then I will accept a reasonable estimate.

Please also note that all of the questions are separate requests for information; question one refers to any direct payments to trade unions whereas question two relates to any staff time spent on trade union duties / activities and finally question three relates to the deduction of member dues by the organisation on the trade unions' behalf. If the response to any of the questions is 'nil' then please continue to respond to the other questions.

Response:

Thank you for your email of Wednesday 18 July 2012 requesting information regarding the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC)'s relationship with trade unions.

In response to your questions:

1. DECC has not paid any money to any trades unions during 2010-11 or 2011-12.
2. a) The department provides facility time for the following three trade unions: The Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS), Prospect and the FDA.
b) We have a Department Trade Union Side that represents all three of the recognised unions. The number of full time equivalent staff provided were: 2010/11 - 1.2; 2011/12 - 1.95
3. Upon request DECC does automatically deduct trade union subscriptions from staff salaries in the payroll process in order to pass the subscriptions on to the unions. DECC does not charge the unions for this service.

Appeals procedure

If you are unhappy with the result of your request for information, you may request an internal review within two calendar months of the date of this letter. If you wish to request an internal review please contact me.

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 Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

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