

Our ref: DIL

Your ref: ENF0301823

Information Commissioners Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

April 14 2010

Dear Sirs,

Re: FOI Compliance

Thank you for your letter dated March 17 2010 regarding delays in responding to FOI requests made to us. I note you have asked for further clarification regarding the issues we raised in our letter to you. I will go through each separately.

We have determined that there has been a 40% increase in the number of FOI requests we receive compared to the same time last year. The current size of the backlog that we have is **72** outstanding FOI requests, of which **69** are currently out of time. We receive an average of 21 FOI requests per month.

The date of receipt of the oldest request is May 15 2009, however, the next request after that is December 1 2009. The former request is exceptional and relates to a high profile investigation which we conducted. This request was part of our original backlog of requests. We recognise that the time in responding to this request is taking us some time. We have been keeping the requestor informed about the progress of her request on a regular basis. This request has been going through a consultation process however; I can

confirm that we are almost at completion stage. Therefore, the latter date is likely to be the oldest request we have.

The target date which has been set for elimination of the backlog is the end of September 2010. We understand that this is some time away and hope that you can appreciate this time includes staff member training and under the current circumstances this is the most realistic date.

The steps that are being taken to monitor progress against the target date are that we have introduced changes to our processes to streamline our systems to shift the burden of responsibility for information retrieval and decisions on the disclosure of requested information to the information asset owner (IAO), and away from the very small FOI team, whose role is rather one of overseeing the process and providing advice and support to IAOs. This process allows our FOI team to consult more efficiently with those departments within our organisation who are best placed to comment on the information which has been requested.

Our FOI Team Leader also holds regular one to one meetings with each team member to discuss individual targets and monitor progress.

As I write to you today I can confirm that yesterday we recruited 3 new team members, 2 temporary staff and 1 permanent staff, therefore bringing the compliment of staff to 4. We hope to have those team members fully trained by the middle of May. Our FOI team not only have responsibility for FOI requests, they are also responsible for completing subject access requests under the Data Protection Act.

We also currently have in place an allocation strategy through a weekly target system. For FOI requests the weekly target set is 2 requests per team member. As I have mentioned above the team also deal with subject access requests and the weekly target for those are 3 requests. Our allocation strategy will be more effectual once those team members have been fully trained.

We note that you have asked whether we are handling new requests separately from the backlog. This is partially the case. We have been allocating 1 request from the backlog and 1 which is currently still in time to complete. As we now have a full compliment of staff with the team, once they are fully trained, two of those staff members will be tasked to complete the backlog, therefore allowing the 2 remaining staff members to concentrate on all new requests. As per our allocation strategy, the target is to complete 2 FOI requests per team member per week. I must stress that the staff member will also be tasked to complete the backlog of subject access requests that we currently have, and as I have stated above the target for these requests are 3 per team member per week.

We note that you have recommended that the backlog be dealt with separately, we are happy to do this once staff members are fully trained.

I hope the above has addressed your concerns, however if you require any further clarification, or wish to discuss the matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Yours Sincerely

Miss Diljinder Kaur Chowhan
Freedom of Information Team Leader
Independent Police Complaints Commission