

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)

Decision notice

Date: 22 June 2017

Public Authority: Ministry of Justice
Address: 102 Petty France
London
SW1H 9AJ

Decision (including any steps ordered)

1. The complainant has requested information regarding the reimbursement of court fees.
2. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) failed to respond to this request for information and the Commissioner's decision is that the MoJ has breached section 10(1) of the FOIA.
3. The Commissioner requires the public authority to take the following steps to ensure compliance with the legislation.
 - The MoJ must provide the complainant with a response to this request in accordance with its obligations under the FOIA.
4. The public authority must take these steps within 35 calendar days of the date of this decision notice. Failure to comply may result in the Commissioner making written certification of this fact to the High Court pursuant to section 54 of the Act and may be dealt with as a contempt of court.

Request and response

5. On 25 November 2016, the complainant wrote to the MoJ and requested information in the following terms:

"I would like to know how much will be reimbursed, or the most up to date estimate of how much will be reimbursed, as a result of the decision not to proceed with the higher fees regime in the First-tier and Upper tribunals of the Immigration and Asylum Chamber.

I would also like to know how many people will be reimbursed, or the most up to date estimate of how many people will be reimbursed.

The announcement was made here:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2016-11-25/HCWS284/>

6. The complainant chased a response and on 29 March 2017 the MoJ replied. It stated that *"I'm sorry that we have been unable to respond within the designated timeframe. Please be assured that work on your request is ongoing and we will respond to you as soon as possible."*
7. At the date of this decision notice, the MoJ had yet to provide a substantive response.

Scope of the case

8. The complainant contacted the Commissioner on 10 April 2017 to complain about the way his request for information had been handled.
9. The Commissioner considers the scope of this decision notice to be the MoJ's compliance with section 10(1) of the FOIA.

Reasons for decision

10. Section 10(1) of the FOIA states that a public authority must respond to a request promptly and *"no later than the twentieth working day following the date of receipt"*.
11. The Commissioner wrote to the MoJ on 4 May 2017 and asked it to respond to the complainant's request within 10 working days. The MoJ responded to the Commissioner on 17 May 2017 and said it hoped to send a response to the complainant soon.
12. In this case the MoJ breached section 10(1) by failing to respond to the request within 20 working days.

Other matters

13. As well as finding above that the MoJ is in breach of the FOIA, the Commissioner has also made a record of the delay in this case. This may form evidence in future action against the MoJ should evidence from other cases suggest that there are systemic issues within the MoJ that are causing delays.

Right of appeal

14. Either party has the right to appeal against this decision notice to the First-tier Tribunal (Information Rights). Information about the appeals process may be obtained from:

First-tier Tribunal (Information Rights)
GRC & GRP Tribunals,
PO Box 9300,
LEICESTER,
LE1 8DJ

Tel: 0300 1234504

Fax: 0870 739 5836

Email: GRC@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.justice.gov.uk/tribunals/general-regulatory-chamber

15. If you wish to appeal against a decision notice, you can obtain information on how to appeal along with the relevant forms from the Information Tribunal website.
16. Any Notice of Appeal should be served on the Tribunal within 28 (calendar) days of the date on which this decision notice is sent.

Signed

Alun Johnson
Team Manager
Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF