

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)

Decision notice

Date: 18 April 2024

Public Authority: Department for Science, Innovation and Technology

Address: Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

Decision (including any steps ordered)

1. The complainant has requested the anti-vaccination narratives and COVID-19 vaccine rollout reports from the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT). By the date of this notice, DSIT had not issued a substantive response to this request.
2. The Commissioner's decision is that DSIT has breached section 10(1) of FOIA by failing to provide a valid response to the request within the statutory time frame of 20 working days.
3. The Commissioner requires DSIT to take the following step to ensure compliance with the legislation:
 - DSIT must provide the complainant with a substantive response to the request in accordance with its obligations under FOIA.¹
4. The public authority must take this step within 30 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 FOIA and may be dealt with as a contempt of court.

¹ The Commissioner expects the public authority to take appropriate precautions to protect any personal data, particularly when disclosing information in a spreadsheet or similar format; [Information Commissioner's Office - Advisory note to public authorities | ICO](#)

Request and response

5. On 24 January 2024, the complainant made the following request for information to DSIT:

“Please provide the following reports:

- Anti-Vaccination Narratives: UK Focus, February 2021
- AstraZeneca/Oxford vs Sputnik V: Vaccine Roll-Out

These are referred to in [reference number redacted]:

[link redacted]”

6. DSIT wrote to the complainant on 21 February 2024, notifying them that they were still processing the request and apologising for the delay.
7. The complainant followed up with DSIT on 5 March 2024. DSIT responded on 6 March 2024, apologising for the delay and advising that they aimed to respond to the request soon.
8. To date, the complainant has not received a response to their request for information.

Reasons for decision

9. Section 1(1) of FOIA states that:

“Any person making a request for information to a public authority is entitled –

- (a) to be informed in writing by the public authority whether it holds information of the description specified in the request, and
- (b) if that is the case, to have that information communicated to him.”

10. Section 10(1) of FOIA states that a public authority must respond to a request promptly and “not later than the twentieth working day following the date of receipt”.
11. On 30 March 2024, the Commissioner wrote to DSIT, reminding it of its responsibilities and asking it to provide a substantive response to the complainant’s request within 10 working days.

12. Despite this intervention, DSIT has failed to respond to the complainant.
13. From the evidence provided to the Commissioner in this case, it is clear that DSIT did not deal with the request for information in accordance with FOIA. The Commissioner finds that DSIT has breached section 10(1) by failing to respond to the request within 20 working days and it is now required to respond to the request in accordance with FOIA.

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: 0203 936 8963

Fax: 0870 739 5836

Email: grc@justice.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.

Pamela Clements
Group Manager
Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF