



Cabinet Office

Room 401
70 Whitehall
London, SW1A 2AS

foi-team@cabinetoffice.gov.uk
www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk

Wynne Jones
By email: cj-editor@biggeesblog.cymru

FOI Reference: FOI2020/20785

10 December 2020

Dear Wynne Jones

We refer to your request where you asked:

*"I understand the **"Behavioural Insights Team [BIT]"** is partly owned by the UK Cabinet Office. I am aware of the information available on their website at the link below regarding Covid-19*

<https://www.bi.team/>

It would be helpful if you could arrange to provide me with the following information at your convenience.

A list of the Covid-19 advisory papers presented to date by BIT for consideration by UK Government to inform policy."

I am writing to advise you that following a search of our paper and electronic records, I have established that some of the information you requested is held by the Cabinet Office.

The information you have requested is exempt under section 35 of the Freedom of Information Act, which protects the formulation of policy and communications between Ministers. Disclosure would weaken Ministers' ability to discuss controversial and sensitive topics free from premature public scrutiny.

Section 35 is a qualified exemption and I have considered whether the balance of the public interest favours our release of this material. There is a general public interest in disclosure of information and I recognise that openness in government may increase public trust in and engagement with the government. I recognise that the decisions Ministers make may have a significant impact on the lives of citizens and there is a public interest in their deliberations being transparent. These public interests have to be weighed against a strong public interest that policy-making and its implementation are of the highest quality and informed by a full consideration of all the options. Ministers must be able to discuss policy freely and frankly, exchange views on available options and understand their possible implications. The candour of all involved would be affected by their assessment of whether the content of the discussions will be disclosed prematurely. If discussions were routinely made public there is a risk that Ministers may feel inhibited from being frank and candid with one another. As a result the quality of debate underlying collective decision making would decline, leading to worse informed and poorer decision making. Taking into account all the circumstances of this case, I have concluded that the balance of the public interest favours withholding this information.

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request or wish to request an internal review, you should write to:

Eirian Walsh Atkins
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2AS

email: foi-team@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

You should note that the Cabinet Office will not normally accept an application for internal review if it is received more than two months after the date that the reply was issued.

If you are not content with the outcome of your internal review, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by the Cabinet Office. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane

Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. Khan', written in a cursive style.

FOI Team
Cabinet Office