

15 May 2025

REFERENCE: FOI\25\48 (*Continuation FOI\25\35*)

Dear Sir,

Following receipt of the outcome of your internal review our response to your FOI request has been re-visited.

Your request is outlined below

1. When did DoJ officials commence the review of the MAT process?

An internal administrative review of the MAT process commenced in early Autumn of 2024.

2. If completed, when was it completed and where are the findings of the review published?
3. If not yet complete, when will it be completed and where will the findings of the review be published.

Questions 2 and 3 are answered together.

This internal administrative review of the MAT process is currently being progressed and will culminate in the launch of a recruitment exercise to appoint MAT panel members. The purpose of the internal review is to optimise the administrative procedures for the recruitment, appointment, and establishment of future MATs. The publication of the findings of the review will be considered on completion.

Some of the information you have requested is covered by the following section of the Freedom of Information Act 2000:

- section 35 (1)(a) (formulation of Government Policy)

We apologise that we did not include this exemption regarding the information you requested in our original response to question three.

Qualified Exemptions

The exemption provisions of section 35(1)(a) confer a qualified exemption to our duty under section 1(1)(b) of the Act – to release the information requested. Information covered by qualified exemptions can only be withheld where the public interest falls in favour of applying the exemptions.

We have provided details of our Public Interest Test considerations in Annex A to this letter.

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 request an internal review, please do so in writing stating the reasons to the address above.

If following an internal review, you were to remain dissatisfied you may make a complaint to the Information Commissioner and ask the Commissioner to investigate whether the DOJ has complied with the terms of the FOIA. You can write to the Information Commissioner at:

Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

The Commissioner will not investigate a complaint unless an internal review procedure has been carried out.

Further details on the role of the Information Commissioner and the handling of appeals can be found at: www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk

Yours sincerely

Records & Information Manager

Annex A

35(1)(a) (Formulation of government policy).

In favour of release:

- **Disclosure prior to a decision being taken will lead to more informed public debate**

- **Informs the public how policy decisions are reached, what options are being considered, why some are excluded and others preferred**
- **Avoids the public view that their opinion doesn't count and that the decision was a foregone conclusion**
- **May expose wrongdoing**

In favour of non-disclosure:

- **Maintains private thinking space**
- **Future release may inhibit debate and the exploration of the full range of policy options that ought to be considered**
- **The prospect of release may put policy makers in the position of having to defend everything that has been raised during deliberation**
- **Disclosure could allow targeted lobbying by certain groups that could inhibit objective decisions being made.**
- **Disclosure could compromise future consultation and thwart the exchange of ideas**
- **Releasing information relating to the development of some policies is likely to prejudice such development and subsequent implementation.**

Conclusion

We are satisfied that the section 35 policy formulation exemption applies. Although the proposed policies will involve changes which could have a significant effect on the general public, the disclosure of the information may have an adverse effect on the policy makers in that they would be less likely to provide full and frank advice or opinions on policy proposals. For that reason, it is our view that the public interest in protecting the policy making activities outweighs the public interest in releasing the information.