



Department of
Justice

An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt

Máinnystrie O tha Laa

www.justice-ni.gov.uk

Department of Justice
Records & Information Team
Information Services Division
Block 5
Knockview Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont

15 April 2025

Reference: FOI\25\8

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for your email dated 20/01/25, in which you make the following request:

“Under FOI, can I please be provided with a copy of any correspondence from the last two years between the NIO/UK government and the Department of Justice which references the funding of the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime.”

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives you two rights of access when you write to us asking for information. You have the right to know whether we hold recorded information falling in scope of your request, and you have the right to receive this recorded information subject to cost limit or exemption.

RESPONSE

The Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime (EPPOC) is a cross-Executive Programme hosted by the Department of Justice (DOJ). In order to give you an understanding of the Programme’s funding, the Programme Team has provided, under line of business, the following information in addition to attaching the recorded information that falls within scope of your request. You have also met with the Programme Team who provided background information on the Programme and how it is funded.

The Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime is jointly funded by the NI Executive and the UK Government; the 2015 Fresh Start Agreement and Spending Round of the same year provided a commitment to provide £50m over five years. For Phase 2 of the Programme (from 2021) approximately £16m per year has been provided. The Executive's agreement, in September 2024, to extend the Programme until March 2027 was accompanied by an Executive commitment to provide up to £8m to EPPOC in each of the next two years – from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2027. In its budget announcement on 30 October 2024, the UK Government agreed to match fund EPPOC in 2025/26, resulting in an indicative EPPOC budget of £16m for 2025/26. Whilst there is not yet an agreed allocation from the UK Government for 2026/27, this will be considered as part of the UK Government's forthcoming Spending Review that will take place in 2025.

As a result of the situation outlined above, earmarked EPPOC funding is £16m for 2025/26 and currently £8m for 2026/27. The Table below shows the overall budget (previous years and proposed) for each year of Phase 2 of EPPOC.

EPPOC Funding 2021-27

Source	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27
NI Executive	£8,000,000	£8,000,000	£8,000,000	£8,000,000	£8,000,000	£8,000,000
UK Government	£5,030,000	£5,030,000	£5,030,000	£8,000,000	£8,000,000	To be considered as part of SR25
NDNA Special Circumstances	£2,600,000	£4,100,000	£3,300,000	-	-	-
Total	£15,630,000	£17,130,000	£16,300,000	£16,000,000	£16,000,000	£8m earmarked

[Note: NDNA Special circumstances was a three-year £10m package ring-fenced for the Communities in Transition project. Funding could be profiled flexibly across years. It ended in 2024/25]

In relation to your FOI request, the Programme Team conducted a search of its electronic records management system to locate correspondence in scope in the two year timeframe specified.

Following identification of relevant documents, these were then reviewed for public release in accordance with our duties under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The information is attached except where it is covered by the following sections of the Freedom of Information Act 2000:

Section 35(1)(a) – Government Policy

Section 40(2) – absolute exemption - Personal Information

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 withholding the information.

Annex A details our Public Interest Test considerations in relation to each of the documents considered for release.

Absolute Exemption

Section 40(2)

The Data Protection Act 2018 prohibits the release of personal data and information which relates to third parties which could, if released, identify the third party to whom it relates. Disclosure would contravene the first and second principle of the Data Protection Act in that the data would be processed unfairly and in a manner incompatible with the original purpose. Further, none of the conditions in Article 6 of the General Data Protection Regulation are met to authorise lawful disclosure.

It is the Department's view that names of Departmental officials (below a particular grade) would have expectation that their names would not be publicly released in connection to their work. Release of this information would be unfair thus breaching the first principle of the Data Protection Act. For this reason, names falling within these parameters have been redacted to protect their personal right of privacy.

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

PUBLIC INTEREST TEST CONSIDERATIONS

Section 35 is a qualified exemption and when it is applied we are required to consider whether the public interest in withholding information outweighs the public interest in releasing it. Please find below the results of the Public Interest test in relation to Section 35.

Section 35: Government Policy

In favour of release:

- There is a public interest in disclosing this type of information to promote government transparency and accountability, to increase public awareness, and to enable public participation in the democratic process.

In favour of non-disclosure:

- The need to reserve a safe space to consider policy options in private – civil servants and subject experts need to be able to engage in free and frank discussion of all the policy options internally, to be able to expose their merits and demerits and possible implications.

Conclusion:

The Department recognises the clear public interest in ensuring that the principles of accountability and transparency are applied in relation to how public money is spent. In this case, some information relates to ongoing policy formulation, some of which remains at an early and sensitive stage. The Department takes the view that the issues under discussion require the space for engagement in free and frank discussion and debate in order to further the ongoing development of appropriate policy and proposals for the consideration of Ministers.

The Department is, therefore, content that the balance of public interest lies in not releasing the information requested into the public domain. The information withheld under this section is minimal and proportionate.

ATTACHMENTS

Email 1

From: James Crawford
Sent: 22 July 2023 12:57
To: Brown, Adele

[Personal information redacted S40(2)]

Cc: [personnel names redacted S40(2)]
Subject: Re: 24/5 UKG Programme funding

Caution – This email has been received from outside the NICS network.

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Hi Adele,

Thanks for getting in touch about this. The team are very much on the case and we understand this is pressing.

Having spoken to HMT, we've agreed a single stage business case is the way forward. We have a mature draft of this which we're going to test with the Fiscal Team early next week and then intend to pass you and the team a copy in the second half of the week to get your input. Once we're all happy with it, we'll get it to HMT who have indicated a four week turnaround. Our understanding is that confirmation by September would be fine, which is achievable with where we're at, but do let us know if that's not the case.

Hope that helps.

Cheers.

James

On Fri, 21 Jul 2023 at 17:06, Brown, Adele wrote:

James, [personnel name redacted S40(2)]

We had a very productive discussion with HMT in London a few weeks ago and briefed them on the Programme, progress and challenges. One of the most pressing issues we need to resolve is securing written confirmation of UKG's funding commitment to the Programme for 24/5 and the terms under which this is being provided. Without this formal confirmation, we cannot realistically renew projects or issue new contracts and we risk losing good delivery partners who have no capacity, particularly in the current financial climate, to operate at risk.

Please could I ask for your help in securing this as swiftly as possible? Our most immediate risk sits with a number of community focused projects operating in areas of acute vulnerability. This includes Fresh Start Through Sport, community based family support for families at risk of exploitation, women's groups, restorative practice, community safety, health and wellbeing and mental health supports.

I am going to be on leave next week but [personnel name redacted S40(2)]
CC'd will be able to assist you if any further clarification is needed.

Many thanks

Adele

[Click here](#) for personal testimony of life in areas with a high prevalence of paramilitary/
criminal control

#datadriven #evidence-based #endingtheharm

[Personal information redacted S40(2)]

Email 2

From: [personnel name redacted S40(2)]
Sent: 19 March 2024 08:28
To: Adele Brown; [personnel name redacted S40(2)]
Subject: UKG funding for Tackling Paramilitarism Programme FY 24/25

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Adele,

We spoke on Friday afternoon about UKG funding for the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme in FY 24/25. My understanding is that is that the total amount of funding allocated is £7,998,228, made up of the following:

£4,848,228: spending review allocation (submitted by NIO)

£3,000,000: Spring Budget uplift as approved by HMT (for the community resilience strand of the Programme - investment decisions to be taken by Programme Sponsor Group)

[Sentence redacted (S35(1)(a) – Government Policy]

I've looped in [personnel name redacted S40(2)], our Head of Finance, who will be able to advise on the technicalities around how the funding should be transferred. My understanding is that in previous years, DoF submitted a request for the SR allocation via the main estimates process. My recollection is that HMT agreed that the additional funding for FY 24/25 would be provided in the same way as the SR allocation.

[Sentence redacted (S35(1)(a) – Government Policy]

Thanks,

[Personnel name redacted S40(2)]

[Personal information redacted S40(2)]

Erskine House, 20-32 Chichester St, Belfast BT1 4GF

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Northern Ireland Office

Email 3

From: [Personnel name redacted S40(2)]
Sent: 20 August 2024 07:49
To: [personnel names redacted S40(2)]; Taylor, Katie
<Katie.Taylor@justice-ni.gov.uk>; Curran, Lynne
<lynne.curran@justice-ni.gov.uk>
Subject: Re: Harm Reduction SR Workshop
Attachments: Draft EPPOC bid for UKG SR v.1 August 2024.DOCX

[personnel name redacted S40(2)], all,

Please see attached an initial draft from EPPOC. There are a number of uncertainties that have a significant impact on our ask; these are set out in the document. We will await any further steer on likely timing to consider whether we would need to engage the EPPOC governance structures if more detail is needed.

[Paragraph redacted (S35(1)(a) – Government Policy]

Many thanks and look forward to discussing later.

Thanks,

[Personnel name redacted S40(2)]

[Personal information redacted S40(2)]

From: [personnel name redacted S40(2)]

Sent: Monday, August 19, 2024 4:52 PM

To: [personnel names redacted S40(2)]; Taylor, Katie <Katie.Taylor@justice-ni.gov.uk>;
Curran, Lynne <lynne.curran@justice-ni.gov.uk>

Subject: Harm Reduction SR Workshop

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Afternoon everyone,

I know a number of you are still trying to finalise bids so I thought it would be helpful to move tomorrow's meeting to online only.

I am speaking to the NIO SR lead in the morning and so should be able to offer an update on SR timings and the process but if anyone is unable to attend tomorrow then I am happy to pick up individually.

Many thanks,

[personnel name redacted S40(2)]

[Personal information redacted S40(2)]

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Email 4 and attached letter

From: Caroline Hacker [Personal information redacted S40(2)]
To: Brown, Adele [Personal information redacted S40(2)]
Sent: 30 October 2024 14:47
Subject: Budget outcome

CAUTION – This email has been received from outside the NICS network. If you have any concerns, please report for investigation.

Hello Adele

I hope all is well with you.

I tried to phone earlier, but I think you may be on leave.

I just wanted to let you know the good news that the Chancellor has agreed the budget of 8m for the EPPOC for the financial year 2025-26 - please see the attached letter.

A huge thank you to you and the team for all your work on this, it feels like a great result.

Look forward to seeing you soon.

Caroline

--

Dr Caroline Hacker
[Personal information redacted S40(2)]

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Letter attached to Email 4

