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19 May 2011

Thank you for your email of 18 April to the Civil Service Commission requesting information about the Civil Service Code. We are dealing with this request under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act, 2000.

I will address your questions in the order they appeared in your e-mail.

(1) Details of all appeals dealt with under the Civil Service Code. I appreciate that you may be unable to provide details of the individuals involved or the departments concerned – an overview/ summary of whether the Civil Servant contacted the Commission on an anonymous, confidential or self identified basis, the type of concerns raised and outcomes would be sufficient for my purposes.

You will probably be aware that concerns under the Civil Service Code should in the first instance be raised by a civil servant with their own department. The Civil Service Commission will usually only be involved in cases where the civil servant who raised a concern does not believe that they have received a reasonable response; the Commission may also take complaints direct if it judges it appropriate to do so. The Commission is not therefore aware of all the cases that are raised and resolved within departments.

I attach a chart which details the numbers of approaches to the Commissioners/Commission since the introduction of the Code in 1995 to March 2010. Information for the period April 2010 to March 2011 will be included in the Commission's Annual Report, published in July. Many of the approaches that we receive are not accepted for investigation, most often because they are not brought by a civil servant or they are judged to fall outside the terms of the Code.

Only a small number of appeals are accepted for full investigation. I attach a paper that gives details of all the cases that were accepted for full investigation 1996-2009. There have been no further cases since 2009 that have been investigated and settled though there are a number being investigated or pending investigation at present.

(2) In evidence to the Public Administration Select Committee, Ms Janet Paraskeva identified in response to Q.236 (<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmpubadm/c83-iv/c8302.htm>) that the Commission would be requesting departmental staff surveys to include the following two questions in regard to appeals under the code namely “whether they actually know about the procedures that exist; and, two, whether they feel confident that they could use them.” I would appreciate it if you could provide me with any statistical information with regards to these two questions, if available.

There were actually three questions on the Code that were introduced in the first Civil Service-wide staff survey in 2009 and then repeated in the 2010 survey. I attach a paper which lists the responses for most of the major departments across the two survey years for the questions relating to the Civil Service Code. This was put together for the Commission’s use. The full data for the surveys, across the Civil Service and for individual departments, can be found on www.data.gov.uk search for ‘civil service people survey’.

(3) In response to Q.241 Ms Paraskeva identifies that a confidential website has been set up for nominated officers to discuss concerns. I would appreciate it if you could provide me with any statistical information (if available) on the usage of this website (ie how many nominated officers have used the website and how many have contacted the Commissioners through the website).

I can confirm that there are 237 registered users for the password-protected side of the Commission’s website for use by Nominated Officers and others with interest in the Civil Service Code. We do not hold the other information requested.

(4) Whether a Civil Servant’s duties under the Civil Service Code amount to a contractual obligation. I understand that this may be too broad a question to answer in a standard FOI request. I would appreciate it, if possible and if available, if you could provide me with any documentation on the subject.

The Civil Service Code (November 2010 issue) says at para 20 ‘This Code is part of the contractual relationship between you and your employer.’ You may also like to look at the Civil Service Management Code which makes reference to the inclusion of the Civil Service Code in the terms and conditions of employment of civil servants. This is available from the Civil Service website www.civilservice.gov.uk .

I hope that this information is of interest and will be of use to you.

I assume that you have looked at the information on the Civil Service Code on the Commission's website and also in the Commission's Annual Reports, which are available on the website. You may wish to know that over the next 24 hours the website will move to a new address www.civilservicecommission.independent.gov.uk and there may be a small, temporary loss of functionality.

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:

Richard Jarvis
Chief Executive
Civil Service Commission
35 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BQ

e-mail: richard.jarvis@independentoffices.x.gsi.gov.uk

You should note that the Civil Service Commission 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 Civil Service Commission. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely

Bill Brooke
Principal Policy Adviser