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12 April 2013

Our Ref: FOI/13/06

Sent via email to:

Dear

Thank you for your email dated 14 March 2013 to the Civil Service Commission requesting information. Your request was:

*Did the department receive any complaints between April 2008 and April 2012 about recruitment by the Serious Fraud Office? If so, how many? How many of these were investigated? What was the outcome of those investigations?*

*Did the department review the Serious Fraud Office's compliance with the Civil Service's recruitment rules at all between April 2008 and April 2012? if so, what was the outcome of this review?*

I am dealing with this request under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act, 2000.

In response to your first question, the Civil Service Commission received two complaints of possible breach of the Commission's Recruitment Principles by the Serious Fraud Office between April 2008 and April 2012. Both of these complaints were accepted for investigation but no breach was found in either case, and neither complaint was therefore upheld.

Regarding your second question, it might be helpful to briefly outline how the Commission reviews departments' compliance with our Recruitment Principles. Under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010, the Commission must carry out whatever reviews of recruitment policies and practices it thinks are necessary to establish that the statutory requirement of recruitment on merit on the

basis of fair and open competition is being upheld. We do this through an audit of the recruitment policies and practices of Government departments and agencies to posts below Senior Civil Service Pay Band 2. Appointments to the Civil Service at Pay Band 2 above are chaired by Civil Service Commissioners.

Monitoring of compliance is contracted to a specialist firm appointed after competitive tender. The Commission's Recruitment Standing Committee determines how to select the departments and agencies to be visited and decides any topics for thematic review.

The Commission's compliance monitoring approach requires departments and agencies to carry out a risk-based self-assessment of their policies and procedures. The Commission, with our auditors, assesses the departmental returns and supporting documentation against the risk of non-compliance with the Recruitment Principles.

A sample of organisations is chosen for follow-up visits by the auditors, accompanied wherever possible by a Civil Service Commissioner. The intention of these visits is to look at the operation of the organisation's recruitment policies and procedures and examine the records of a sample number of recruitment competitions.

No compliance monitoring information is held about the Serious Fraud Office for the year 2008/09.

The Serious Fraud Office were visited by auditors in September 2010, reviewing recruitment for the year 2009/10 and the visit resulted in a high risk rating being awarded and an action plan for improvement being issued to the Department.

In 2010/11 the Serious Fraud Office submitted a self assessment of their recruitment compliance when a medium risk rating was assessed.

The Serious Fraud Office was visited by auditors in June 2012, reviewing recruitment during 2011/12. The final risk rating awarded to the Serious Fraud Office will be published in the Commission's Annual Report in July 2013. This information is therefore potentially exempt under the exemption in Part 2, Section 22 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 relating to information intended for future publication. This is a qualified exemption under the Act and the Commission has therefore considered in all the circumstances of the case whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. We have concluded that it does not, and so we are releasing this information. This visit resulted in a high risk rating being awarded to the Department.

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:

Clare Salters  
Chief Executive  
Civil Service Commission

G08  
1 Horse Guards Road  
London SW1A 2HQ

Email: [clare.salters@csc.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:clare.salters@csc.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

Sean Edwards-Playne  
**Communications and Case Officer**