



Request

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I would like to request the following information:

1. The total number of complaints received in the last two years up to the current date regarding:
 - Competition scams
 - Fake competitions
 - Competitions that failed to pay out promised prizes
2. For each complaint, please provide:
 - The date the complaint was received
 - A brief description or categorisation of the complaint (e.g. "fake social media competition", "entry fee taken but no winner announced", etc.) name of company etc.
 - The medium or platform involved (if available), such as social media, websites, text/SMS, email, or others
 - Whether the complaint resulted in any investigation, action, or referral to another body
3. If possible, please break down the complaints by year and month.

Response

Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) relieves a public authority from the obligation to comply with a request for information where the estimated time required to locate, review and extract the information exceeds a certain threshold set out in Regulations.

The Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004 (SI 2004/3244) set out the rules in relation to the cost limit (otherwise called the "appropriate limit"). These Regulations are published by the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI) and are viewable on their web site from this link: http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2004/uksi_20043244_en.pdf

The Regulations set out the cost limit for Government departments and for other public authorities. For local government, Regulation 3 states that the cost limit is £450 and Regulation 4(4) states that the prescribed hourly rate is £25. Regulation 4(4) further provides that where the local authority estimates the time taken to gather the information would exceed this limit (which based on the prescribed hourly rate, equates to 18 officer hours), it may refuse the request under section 12 of FoIA.

I am satisfied the cost limit applies to your request and will explain why this is the case

Database records of the complaints received by the service is not able to identify the data requested as there is no specific code for 'fake competition' etc. It would fall within the generic code of Fair Trading that is used. The service received over 1800 Fair Trading complaints in the time frame requested.

It is not possible to provide the information requested without individually inspecting each of these records. An estimated minimum of 5 minutes per complaint equates to over 150 hours – far in excess of the 18 officer hours stipulated in the FOI Act.