

8 December 2023

IC-274012-J9Z0

Request

You asked us:

Please can you disclose, preferably by PDF, any communications with the Department of Health and Social Care relating to information that was, or may have been, lost because it was in Matt Hancock's private email account or relating to the Department's retrieval of information for example for handling of freedom of information requests from the account - within this request, I am trying to obtain some knowledge or indication as to what information may be unobtainable from the Department due to it being in the private account as revealed to the ICO in its contacts with the Department, which may or may not include dates when information was produced that is now unavailable information or topics that requests to the Department ask for that might result in not held (because the information was in Matt Hancock's account or is still in that account but the Department can't get hold of it or could get hold of it for ICO's enquiries) - in short, 'where is the 'black hole' in the Department's information record regarding this?' or some indication as to where one, perhaps of several, holes might exist and the hole as far as ICO contact with the Department may give some information or idea about, even vaguely.

We received your request on 1 December 2023.

We have handled your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the FOIA).

Our response

We carried out an investigation into the use of private communication channels by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) in 2021.

I have searched our correspondence with DHSC in relation to the investigation and have been unable to locate any information held that is specifically related to information missing as a result of Matt Hancock's use of private emails. We therefore do not hold information in scope of your request.

Advice and assistance

We have published information about our investigation that may be of interest to you:

- [‘Behind the screens’ report](#) detailing our investigation;
- [Information notice issued to DHSC](#) under FOI;
- [Information notice issued to DHSC](#) under DPA;
- [Reprimand issued to DHSC.](#)

Next steps

You can ask us to review our response. Please let us know in writing if you want us to carry out a review. Please do so within 40 working days.

You can read a copy of our full [review procedure](#) on our website.

If we perform a review but you are still dissatisfied, you can complain to the ICO as regulator of the FOIA. This complaint will be handled just like a complaint made to the ICO about any other public authority.

You can [raise a complaint](#) through our website.

Your information

Our [privacy notice](#) explains what we do with the personal data you provide to us, and sets out [your rights](#). Our [Retention and Disposal Policy](#) details how long we keep information.

Yours sincerely