



Department of Health

27/02/2015

DE00000916590

Dear Mr Waldron,

Thank you for your request of 30 January 2015 under the Freedom of Information Act (2000). Your exact request was:

"I would like to request information under the freedom of information act regarding the Department of Health's decision to introduce new counter-fraud measures in pharmacies by 2018. The DH announced in December that, under the plans, pharmacists would need to check electronically if a customer was eligible for a free prescription.

Please could you tell me:

- a) How much is the total project, including the IT system and cost to pharmacies, estimated to cost?
- b) How much is prescription exemption fraud estimated to cost the NHS?
- c) How were the projected savings of £150m calculated?
- d) What is the estimated cost to pharmacies of conducting the checks? Will this be borne by pharmacies or passed onto the NHS?"

The Department holds information relevant to your request.

a) and d) We consider that this information is exempt under Section 35 of the Freedom of Information Act, which provides protection for information that relates to the formulation or development of government policy. Section 35 is a qualified exemption and requires consideration of the public interest test.

The Department recognises the general public interest in making this information available for the sake of greater transparency and openness. However, the Department believes that the public interest lies in protecting the policy-making process and preserving the ability of officials in the Department to engage in free and candid discussion of policy options without apprehension that suggested courses of action may be held up to scrutiny before they have been fully developed or evaluated.

b) Our most recent estimate suggests that prescription charge fraud costs the NHS approximately £237million a year.

c) This was a prudent estimate based on planned activity by the NHS Business Services Authority and the extensive and preventative nature of the measures we will be taking.

If you have any queries about this email, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within two months of the date of receipt of the response to your original letter and should be addressed to:

Head of the Freedom of Information Team
Department of Health
Room 520
Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2NS

Email: freedomofinformation@dh.gsi.gov.uk

If you are not content with the outcome of your complaint, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner (ICO) for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by the Department. The ICO can be contacted at:

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

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Young

Freedom of Information Officer
Department of Health

freedomofinformation@dh.gsi.gov.uk