

30 July 2024

Dear

ATISN 19572

Thank you for your request which was received on 13 May 2024. Please accept our apologies for the delay in responding to you. You asked for the following:

Information regarding office occupancy rates, remote working policies, and hybrid working arrangements within the Welsh Government:

Daily Office Occupancy Rates:

- a. The total number of office spaces available within Welsh Government buildings.*
- b. Daily records of office occupancy rates over the past 2 years, including average daily occupancy rates and any significant fluctuations observed.*
- c. Any reports, analyses, or projections related to office occupancy trends within Welsh Government buildings.*

Staff Working From Home (WFH) Full-Time:

- a. The total number of employees within the Welsh Government.*
- b. The number of employees currently working from home (WFH) full-time.*
- c. Any policies or guidelines governing remote work arrangements for Welsh Government employees.*

Hybrid Working Policies:

- a. Details of any hybrid working policies or guidelines implemented within the Welsh Government.*
- b. The mandatory number of days or hours required for employees to work from Welsh Government offices under hybrid working arrangements.*
- c. Any assessments, surveys, or feedback gathered from employees regarding the effectiveness or challenges of hybrid working arrangements.*

Response:

Daily Office Occupancy Rates

- a. The total number of office spaces available within Welsh Government buildings. Response:*

There are 5401 desks across the administrative estate in Wales and London and 4605 are available to Welsh Government staff, the remainder are used by tenants or contractors.

- b. Daily records of office occupancy rates over the past 2 years, including average daily occupancy rates and any significant fluctuations observed. Response:*

Daily attendance information is attached with this response. These attendance figures do not include the Cadw sites or the international estate. Welsh Government tracks occupancy rates as part of a number of elements that feed into wider information on how the organisation is operating. However we do not use this data to project or anticipate trends in occupancy. General reports that include a referral to an occupancy rate are not deemed to fall under the scope of this request as that information is a duplicate of what we have attached.

Staff Working From Home (WFH) Full-Time:

- a. The total number of employees within the Welsh Government. Response:
As of Monday 20th may our permanent and temporary WG headcount is: 6107 (5755.6 full time equivalent).
- b. The number of employees currently working from home (WFH) full-time. Response:
We do not hold information of the type you have requested but we can share the details of Formal Homeworkers. Formal Homeworkers are those with a location set as home on our HR System and the information is as 31st March for each year.

Year	No. of homeworkers
31/03/2020	74
31/03/2021	77
31/03/2022	133
31/03/2023	124
31/03/2024	122

- c. Any policies or guidelines governing remote work arrangements for Welsh Government employees. Response:

Policies:

- Home working policy
- Lone working policy

Guidance (the following all relate or refer to different aspects, requirements and support to enable staff to work from home)

- Home Working Furniture and Equipment Guidance

Hybrid Working Policies

- a. Details of any hybrid working policies or guidelines implemented within the Welsh Government.

Policies:

- Clean workspace policy
- Smart working policy (There is currently no Hybrid Working Policy).

Guidance Documents (in addition to some of those listed in the previous response, the following all relate or refer to different aspects, requirements and support to enable staff to work remotely)

- Hybrid meetings and events guidance
- Hybrid working toolkit
- Hybrid working individual charter
- Hybrid working individual charter pack
- Hybrid working team charter example
- Hybrid working team charter template
- Hybrid working individual charter example
- Hybrid working individual charter template

b. The mandatory number of days or hours required for employees to work from Welsh Government offices under hybrid working arrangements. Response:

There is currently no blanket mandatory number of days or hours required for employees to work from Welsh Government offices under hybrid working arrangements. Teams and individuals are encouraged to discuss the arrangements required within their Division based on business need.

c. Any assessments, surveys, or feedback gathered from employees regarding the effectiveness or challenges of hybrid working arrangements.

In line with guidance from the Information Commissioner's Office on "Requests which would impose a grossly oppressive burden but are not covered by the section 12 cost limits", we believe that the element of "feedback from employees" in this section of your request is vexatious under section 14(1) of the FOIA. The guidance confirms that this applies where:

- the requester has asked for a substantial volume of information; and
- the public authority has real concerns about potentially exempt information; and
- potentially exempt information cannot be easily isolated because it is scattered throughout the requested material.

To take these criteria in turn:

Substantial volume of information

The information requested is collected through a variety of different mechanisms and surveys. As an example, one of these single surveys has over 3300 responses. Each response will have around 5-8 open text responses which results in a range of 16,000-26,000 open text responses in one survey dataset.

Concerns about potentially exempt information

Surveys consisting of staff responses include individual comments and views which are likely to amount to personal data within the meaning of the data protection legislation. There is also a risk that, whilst the individual who submitted the response may not themselves be identified, they may have identified other members of staff in their responses. This information would normally be exempt under section 40 of the FOIA. In order to ascertain the

extent of this, the Welsh Government would have to individually review every singular response, line by line, to ensure this was the case.

The potentially exempt information cannot be easily identified

While we do not specifically ask for personal information in the survey questions, we are asking for situations in which people come across issues or how they work in particular situations or their preferences. We know from experience in survey responses our staff will illustrate their responses with actual experience that may then identify themselves or others. There is no way a priori to identify which question(s) or which respondent(s) may include information in their response that then results in an individual being identifiable.

Because of that, each of the documents would need to be interrogated line by line and an assessment made as to whether any individual is identified or is potentially indefinable. Due to the volume of the information captured by the request, this exercise would impose an oppressive burden on the Welsh Government, as it would cause a disproportionate or unjustified level of disruption.

To that end, we believe the above tests are satisfied, and that this element of your request is vexatious and we are refusing it under section 14 (1) of the FOIA on that basis.

However, I can confirm the Welsh Government is currently conducting a Hybrid Working Pilot to explore what hybrid working means in practice for the Welsh Government. The evaluation of the pilot is ongoing but under the elements of “assessment” and “surveys” requested, we are able to disclose, and have attached, the aggregate high level analysis / results. Employee insight on hybrid working is also already available via the annual Civil Service People Survey, which includes the participation of around 100 Civil Service Departments and Organisations, including the Welsh Government. Results are published on GOV.UK. The most recent results can be found here: [Civil Service People Survey: 2023 results - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/civil-service-people-survey-2023) (www.gov.uk)

The reports we have included may provide the information you were asking for; however, you may wish to refine your request by narrowing its scope, or by being more specific about what information you particularly wish to obtain from individual survey responses. For example, such as topic area or information from particular departments. If you do refine your request in this way, this will be treated as a new request.

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government’s handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response.

Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government’s Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit
Welsh Government

Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

or e-mail: Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

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

Telephone: 0303 123 1113

Website: www.ico.org.uk

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely