

FOI DOF/2025-0618

Request

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I am requesting the following information:

1. The total annual spend on Microsoft Windows operating system licences (including Windows client, Windows Server, and associated Client Access Licences) by:
 - The Northern Ireland Assembly, and
 - Each Northern Ireland Executive Department (or centrally on their behalf),for the most recent full financial year available.

2. If available, please provide a breakdown by:
 - Product or licence type (e.g. Windows 10/11, Windows Server CALs, Software Assurance, Microsoft 365 subscriptions that include Windows rights), and
 - Department or purchasing organisation.

3. If the total cannot be provided directly, please provide any internal reports, invoices, or aggregated data showing Microsoft licensing or Windows-related expenditure for that year.

DoF response

I can confirm that Digital, Security and Finance Shared Services (DSF) within the Department of Finance (DoF) holds some of the relevant information requested.

Please see below annual spend for financial year 2025 - 26 for Microsoft Windows operating system, broken down by specific licences for NICS Departments and core services. Please note that expenditure information relating specifically to The Northern Ireland Assembly is not held.

In relation to questions 2 & 3 we considered if this information may be exempt from release under section 43 (2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (Commercial Interests).

As Section 43 (2) is a qualified exemption, DoF have carried out the appropriate Public Interest Test on the information held as part of their decision-making process.

After considering the Public Interest Test we consider it is reasonable in all circumstances that the information held should be released. See Public Interest Test at Annex B below for further information.

Annual spend for financial year 2025 - 26 for Microsoft Windows operating system broken down by specific licences for NICS Departments and core services;

	MS365 (E3)	MS Server and CALs	Total
The Executive Office (TEO)	£125,307.00	£375.93	£125,682.93
Dept of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)	£890,627.40	£32,580.60	£923,208.00
Dept for Communities (DFC)	£458,897.40	£3,633.99	£462,531.39
Dept of Education (DE)	£129,308.40	£1,378.41	£130,686.81
Dept for Enterprise (DFE)	£316,110.60	£3,132.75	£319,243.35
Dept of Finance (DOF)	£858,616.20	£41,853.54	£900,469.74
Dept for Infrastructure (DFI)	£436,363.20	£7,142.67	£443,505.87
Dept of Health (DOH)	£155,633.40	£877.17	£156,510.57
Dept of Justice (DOJ) (Core)	£100,666.80	£1,629.03	£102,295.83
Core Shared Services	N/A	£106,513.50	£106,513.50

Annex B – Public Interest Test

PUBLIC INTEREST TEST			
Request Ref:	DoF/2025-0618		
Request summary of information being withheld for 2025/0618.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Product or licence type (e.g. Windows 10/11, Windows Server CALs, Software Assurance, Microsoft 365 subscriptions that include Windows rights), and ○ Department or purchasing organisation. ○ If the total cannot be provided directly, please provide any internal reports, invoices, or aggregated data showing Microsoft licensing or Windows-related expenditure for that year. 		
Information details:	Exemption applied	Disclosure	Non-disclosure
	(Please complete both columns to show all factors have been considered)		
Questions 2 & 3 on the FOI request regarding the type and total number of licences held is considered to be commercially sensitive information.	Section 43	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To show compliance with the FOI Act principles of accountability and transparency by disclosing information held by the Department as a Public Authority; • There is public interest in understanding government expenditure and the services provided 	<p>Although DoF understand there is a need for openness and transparency in the services NICS utilise, consideration was required in releasing detailed product and licence information alongside annual spend, this could allow calculation of individual product costs, and therefore potentially disadvantaging third party suppliers in future bids</p> <p>To enable us to make an informed decision the third-party supplier was consulted, they raised no specific concerns regarding disclosure in this instance.</p>
<p>PUBLIC INTEREST DECISION: After weighing up the public interest considerations and the third-party supplier response on release, we consider it is reasonable in all the circumstances that the information held should be released.</p>			
Signed: [REDACTED]		Date: 3/12/25	

Annex C - Internal Reviews

An Internal Review request examines the response based on applied exemptions, search adequacy, or response timeliness.

It is not the following, which will be treated as specified:

- Questions asking for clarification on information provided: Will be treated as part of the original FOI request.
- Additional questions about the information in the response: Will be treated as a new FOI request.
- Questions about the subject not related to the original request: Will be treated as new FOI request.
- Questions regarding how a service operates or why a decision was made: Will be treated as normal business and responded to accordingly.
- Complaints or concerns raised in response to information provided: Will be treated in line with relevant complaints procedure.

To make an Internal Review request:

- **Clearly state:** That you want an internal review of a previous FOI response and provide the necessary details.
- **Follow the timeline:** Be sure to submit your request within 40 working days of receiving the original response. If the Department has not responded at all, you have 40 working days after the original 20-day response period has passed.
- **Wait for a response:** The review is typically completed within 20 working days but can take up to 40 working days in exceptional circumstances. The Department should inform you of any delays.

What the review includes

- A fresh decision based on a reconsideration of all relevant factors.
- An assessment of whether the request was handled correctly and if exemptions were applied appropriately.
- The review will be conducted by someone who was not involved in the original decision.

If you wish to request an internal review, please email foi@finance-ni.gov.uk or write to FOI/EIR Team, Department of Finance, 2nd Floor, Craigantlet Buildings, Stoney Road, Belfast, BT4 3SX.