

FOI DOF/2025-0663

Request

The words: man and woman, boys and girls, husband and wife, ladies and gentlemen are legal definitions under the law. But this department is forcing all civil servants not to use legally defined words.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/live/cvgq9ejql39t?post=asset%3Aa9be5242-bc7d-4978-a032-6ec51c1e333e#post>

Therefore, Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 I am requesting the following information to all six questions.

1. Please provide a copy of any directive, advice, instruction, or similar communication issued to Dr Caoimhe Archibald MLA Minister of Finance and/or other staff who worked on the attached document.
2. Please provide the authorisation sort and received to start this document in the first place.

<https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/publications/civil-service-inclusive-language-guide>

3. Please provide the number of Staff members within the DoF and other civil agencies who worked on the attached document.
4. Please provide the Time-Line in months and/or years this document required for publication, from start to finish.
5. Please provide the means of funding to produce this document. How much of tax payers money was spent to produce this document, including the paid hours of every civil servant who worked or contributed to this document.
6. Was the ruling of the Supreme Court (that the legal definition is determined by biological sex), taken into consideration whilst this document was produced.

DoF response

I can confirm the department holds some of the information you have requested.

Information relating to question 1 is attached at **Annexes C - G**. Please note some personal information has been withheld as it is exempt under Section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 40(2) exempts personal information from disclosure if that information relates to someone other than the applicant, and if

disclosure of that information would contravene one of the data protection principles in schedule 1 of the Data Protection Act.

Having considered all the information contained within the Legitimate Interest Test – also known as a Lawful, Fairness and Transparency Test - (attached as a separate document – Annex H), the department has established that, on balance, there is no lawful basis for the disclosure of third-party personal data falling within the scope of the request of which the requester is not the data subject. Making an unrestricted disclosure of personal data for private interests could constitute a disproportionate and unwarranted level of interference with the individuals' rights and freedoms – particularly their right to privacy and family life under the Human Rights Act 1998.

Information you have requested in respect of question 2, 3, 4 and 5 is exempt under section 21(1) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 21 exempts information if this information is reasonably accessible to the applicant by other means. Section 21 is an absolute exemption, and the Department is not required to consider whether the public interest favours disclosure of this information:

- i. The development of the Civil Service Inclusive Language Guide was included in the 2023/24 Civil Service Diversity Action Plan; with the launch of the guide included in a broader programme of work in the 2024/25 Diversity Action plan. Both plans are available at:
 - [NICS Diversity Action Plan 2023-24](#)
 - [NICS Diversity Action Plan 2024 -25](#)
 - ii. The information in relation to cost and those involved the development of the guide is available at:
 - [Written Assembly Question AQW 17153/22-27](#)
 - [Written Assembly Question AQW 17025/22-27](#)
 - [Written Assembly Question AQW 17106/22-27](#)
6. The Civil Service Inclusive Language Guide launched on 27 September 2024 prior to the Supreme Court's judgment in the case of For Women Scotland Ltd v The Scottish Ministers on 16 April 2025.