

Request

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I would like to request the following information.

Guidance relating to incremental pay awards for Northern Ireland Civil Service employees states that, in order for a temporarily promoted employee to receive an incremental pay award at the higher grade, they must:

- have served at least 90 days in the higher grade during the relevant reporting year; and
- be serving on temporary promotion on the pay award date (1 August)

Please confirm whether, between 1 July 2018 and 31 August 2025, there were any instances in which an incremental pay award was implemented for a temporarily promoted employee where one or both of the above criteria were not met.

If such instances occurred, please provide:

- 1.The number of cases identified.
- 2.The circumstances under which the pay award was implemented.
- 3.Whether the implementation resulted from an exception, administrative error, policy interpretation, discretionary decision, or any other reason.
- 4.Details of any guidance, instructions, or approvals relied upon in making such payments.

DoF response

I can confirm that Pay and Workforce Division, the division of the Department of Finance with responsibility for pay policy and pay awards for the Northern Ireland Civil Service, has not applied any exceptions to the eligibility criteria relating to pay progression for temporarily promoted staff. This is not a matter on which it is open to local managers to apply policy interpretation, discretion or exceptions.

The Department estimates that the cost of complying with your request (i.e. to confirm that there has been no administrative error in the application of pay awards for all staff in the Department of Finance who have been temporarily promoted during the period between 1 July 2018 and 31 August 2025) would exceed the appropriate limit prescribed by the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004. Accordingly, the request is exempt under section 12(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Preliminary scoping indicates that there are approximately 2,492 temporary promotion records in the Department of Finance alone during the years covered by your request. These records do not necessarily relate to 2,492 different individuals, as some staff may have held more than one temporary promotion or received multiple annual pay awards during the period in question. However, each temporary promotion record and the corresponding pay award outcome would need to be reviewed individually to determine whether the eligibility criteria

were met and whether any administrative error occurred. I estimate that locating, retrieving and extracting the relevant information, and checking the associated pay records for Department of Finance staff alone, would take approximately 1,246 hours and would therefore exceed the appropriate limit.

ANNEX B – 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.