

FOI DOF/2026-0611

Request and response

I can confirm the Department of Finance holds the information requested.

Answers have been provided below each question for your ease of reference.

1. The current policies, guidance, retention schedules and technical documentation stating whether the content of 121 and group Jabber messages is stored centrally, archived or backed up, and the applicable retention and deletion periods. Please distinguish message content from metadata or logs, and explain any differences between versions or configurations used across NICS departments, if it is not uniform.

Answer: In accordance with our Jabber Usage Policy, instant messaging conversations are not centrally stored, archived, or retained. Furthermore, when the Jabber client is closed, any associated chat history is automatically deleted and is therefore no longer available for retrieval. A copy of the Jabber Usage Policy has been provided for reference at Annex B.

2. Any recorded explanation or policy rationale for a decision not to retain Jabber message content, if it is not retained.

Answer: Instant messages are not regarded as official records and, as such, are not subject to formal records management requirements.

3. The current policy or procedure for requesting the preservation, retrieval and review of Jabber messages in connection with a grievance, bullying or harassment allegation, disciplinary investigation, or other employee relations process. Please include who may authorise access, who conducts a search, and any applicable approval or data protection requirements.

Answer: As outlined in response to Question 1 above, Jabber conversations are neither centrally stored nor retained. Consequently, it is not possible to request the preservation, retrieval, or review of Jabber message content.

Jabber usage Policy

- **Jabber –**

Usage Policy Jabber accounts can be provided to all NIGOV users who have an IPT extension. There are many features within the Jabber application which can help you improve collaboration and communication with your colleagues; however you must make yourself aware of the following considerations in order to comply with legislation such as the Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act:

- **Instant Messaging -**

Instant Messaging conversations are not centrally stored or saved. When the Jabber client is closed, the chat history is also deleted. Instant Messages are not considered to be an official record, and if appropriate, any decisions made should be followed up with an email. You should close all conversations and log out of Jabber at the end of your working day in order to delete any conversations.

- **Desktop Sharing –**

with Remote Control You can share your desktop with multiple users at the same time, plus they can request to take control of your desktop. Desktops can only be shared with other Jabber users within the corporate network. The user is making a conscious decision regarding with whom they are sharing their screen and what they are actually sharing. You must ensure that you have no personal data or sensitive information available to view on your desktop, e.g. close Outlook email notifications if necessary.

- **File Sharing -**

Files can only be shared with other Jabber users within the corporate network. If you use this feature, you must consider what you are sharing and that it is appropriate for the person you are sharing with.

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.