UK Research and Innovation

[redacted]

05 November 2026

Dear [redacted]

Freedom of Information request: FOI2026/00445

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 20 May 2026. I extend our apologies for the delay in processing your request. In your request you sought the following:

Your request:

MRC previously stated "MRC maintains continuous engagement with these investments and does not undertake formal mid-point reviews. Progress is monitored and discussed through established management structures and agreed monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, which operate on an ongoing basis" in response to an FOI request with your reference FOI2026/00276 which is visible here[1].

Under the Freedom of Information Act, further to that previous response, can you please provide:

1) any emails, teams/slack/other messages, or documents concerning "monitoring and evaluation mechanisms" (as described above) for UK Biobank, that were "monitored and discussed through established management structures" visible to members of the MRC Senior Executive Team between 10 March 2026 and 13 May 2026.

2) any "lines to take" or briefings for media inquiries to MRC concerning UK Biobank between 10 March 2026 and 13 May 2026. (this can be limited to only those where UKBiobank is the primary investment discussed in the document - if they're mentioned only as one of multiple UKRI/MRC projects then that document is not of interest)

*3) Any internal MRC discussion related to the website at **biobank.rocher.lc***

References to the 10 March include those immediately prior to the Guardian disclosures that Biobank had leaked re-identifiable data to the internet hundreds of times, the BMJ editorial in mid April, and events surrounding the statements to Parliament in late April which announced UK Biobank had a 10 May deadline (which they missed).

Clarification received: 16/06/2026

By 'visible to', I mean, for example that if an email/message includes a link to the document, then it is in scope, but if there's no reference to it in other communications, then it is not in scope. That an FOIable document was shared by means of a link to a shared office365/googledoc rather than an attachment (as previously) should not be a mechanism to evade this request.

On your reference to Biobank's ongoing issues. I am not particularly interested in communications after the 13 May, but if MRC wish to extend the period of my request to provide a more complete (but not misleading) view, MRC are welcome to do that at MRC's discretion (without the extended period being covered by the cost limit). It is, of course, better that more correct information is in the public domain.

[1] https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/investment_mid_point_reviews

Clarification received: 24/08/2026

[UKRI advised the requestor that in its current form their request would exceed the cost threshold under section 12 of the FOI Act and were asked to refine their request]

In terms of sequencing, please prioritise part 2, part 3, and then part 1.
If it helps, you can limit part 1 to material originated by the Senior Executive Team of MRC.

Our response

I have reviewed your request in the context of your most recent clarification provided on 24 August 2026, prioritising points 2 and 3, over point 1 of your original request.

2) any "lines to take" or briefings for media inquiries to MRC concerning UK Biobank between 10 March 2026 and 13 May 2026. (this can be limited to only those where UKBiobank is the primary investment discussed in the document - if they're mentioned only as one of multiple UKRI/MRC projects then that document is not of interest)

This information is not held. We have reviewed information we hold that falls within the timeframe requested and this has confirmed that there were no media briefings prepared, nor any "lines to take" agreed.

All enquiries received by UKRI were referred to either the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (which has since been superseded by the Department for Business, Innovation, Science and Trade) or UK Biobank as appropriate to respond directly.

*3) Any internal MRC discussion related to the website at **biobank.rocher.lc**,*

This information is not held. We conducted a search for any references to "biobank.rocher.lc" within internal MRC correspondence which returned no results that fell within scope of this part of your request.

1) any emails, teams/slack/other messages, or documents concerning "monitoring and evaluation mechanisms" (as described above) for UK Biobank, that were "monitored and discussed through established management structures" visible to members of the MRC Senior Executive Team between 10 March 2026 and 13 May 2026.

As we informed you in our email of 20 August 2026, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) may hold information falling within the scope of your request. However, we estimate that the cost of determining what information is held that falls within scope of your request would exceed the appropriate limit set out in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004.

We have therefore refused this part your request under section 12(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

It may be helpful to explain why UKRI estimates that responding to your request would exceed the appropriate limit.

Information that may fall within the scope of your request is held across multiple business areas, electronic repositories, records management systems, shared workspaces and other corporate records. Identifying, locating and considering information falling within scope would require extensive searches across multiple sources and the review of a substantial volume of potentially relevant records.

UKRI estimates that the work required would significantly exceed the statutory limit of 18 hours and has therefore refused your request under section 12(1) of the FOIA.

Advice and assistance

Under section 16 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, UKRI has a duty to provide advice and assistance, so far as it is reasonable to do so.

Whilst UKRI is unable to comply with part 1 of you request in its current form, it may be possible for us to comply with a revised request seeking a narrower category of information.

The best way we can assist you is to suggest that you consider narrowing the scope of your request. This may include:

- Limiting the request to a smaller number of named individuals.
- Reducing the time period covered by the request.
- Focusing on a specific part of the request
- Providing specific search terms, subjects, or communications that are of particular interest

Any revised request will be considered on its own merits and will be subject to the provisions of the FOIA, including the application of any relevant exemptions.

Your rights

If you have any queries regarding our response please do let us know. If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review, explaining which elements of this decision you disagree with and why. Internal review requests should be submitted within 40 working days of the date of our response and should be addressed to:

Head of Information Governance
Email: foi@ukri.org

Please quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are still not content with the outcome of the internal review, you may apply to refer the matter to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review procedure provided by UKRI. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: www.ico.org.uk.

If you wish to raise a complaint regarding the service you have received or the conduct of any UKRI staff in relation to your request, please see UKRI's complaints procedure[2].

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]
Information Governance
Information Rights Team
UK Research and Innovation
foi@ukri.org | dataprotection@ukri.org

[2] https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/contact-us/make-a-complaint/#skipnav-target