13 March 2025

Dear ██████████,

Freedom of Information request: FOI2025/00253

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 27 February in which you requested the following:

Your request:

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I am requesting information regarding mobile phones issued to public servants within all Non-Departmental Public Bodies sponsored by your department over the past five years. Specifically, I seek the following details for each of the financial years 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23, and 2023/24:

1. *Number of Mobile Phones Issued: The total number of mobile phones issued to public servants within all Non-Departmental Public Bodies sponsored by your department during each specified financial year.*
2. *Number Not Returned: The total number of mobile phones not returned to the Non-Departmental Public Bodies sponsored by your department after public servants left their employment in each specified financial year.*
3. *Number Remaining Active: The total number of mobile phones that remained active (i.e., connected to a network with ongoing service) after public servants left their employment in each specified financial year, including the duration (in months) these phones remained active post-departure, if available.*
4. *Costs of Phones Not Returned or Remaining Active:*
   a. The total cost of handsets for mobile phones that were not returned or remained active after civil servants left, broken down by year.
   b. The total cost of data and phone call charges incurred by these mobile phones after the public servants' departure, broken down by year.

Our response:

I can confirm that UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) holds some information relevant to your request.

We note that you sent the same request to several research councils. All the research councils, Innovate UK and Research England have been brought together under UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). As this is the case, all your requests were handled as a single request from UKRI, where mobile handsets are managed centrally, with the exception of the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC). Please see below for further information.

Table 1: UKRI Mobile Phone & Connection Data

Financial Year	Number of Mobile Phones Issued[1]	Number of Mobile Phone Not Returned	Connections Remaining Active[2]	Total Cost of Mobile Phones Not Returned	Total Cost of Data and Call Charges
2019/20	478	Not Held	Not Held	Not Held	Not Held
2020/21	649	Not Held	Not Held	Not Held	Not Held
2021/22	344	Not Held	Not Held	Not Held	Not Held
2022/23	366	1	1	£321	£2.20
2023/24	364	21	13	£6,254	£44.33

Information is not held on the number of mobile phones not returned, the number of connections that remained active, the total cost of mobile phones not returned and total cost of data and call charges for handsets not returned prior to 2022/23 as there is not considered to be a business use for this information.

The number of mobile phones issued[1] is the total number of handset issued each financial year, which may include handsets that have been returned by users and reissued. The total number of mobile phones currently in use within UKRI (excluding STFC) is 1,910, however this number is subject to constant change due to employees leaving the organisation, users no longer requiring the device or devices no longer supporting the latest operating system updates.

In relation to the number of mobile phones remaining active, it is not possible to track this information. Instead we have provided information on the number of connections that remained active[2] for a period of time after an employee has left the organisation. A full bar and 30-day notice period is placed on a connection when no longer required, meaning the connection cannot be used and will not incur any additional out-of-bundle charges due to disconnection from the mobile network. Once the 30-day period has passed, the connection becomes fully deactivated, with a final pro-rata bill generated. Therefore, of the connections remaining active, none of these remained active for more than 30 days.

In addition to the above, the STFC are responsible for the management of their own mobile and data connections, with handsets being managed by individual departments, rather than centrally. Therefore, this information is not tracked in the same way as UKRI and not held in a way that provides a historical view or can be split by financial year.

We can, however, confirm that there are currently 1,629 mobile phones in use within the STFC and that mobile connections are disabled as part of the leaver process. STFC connections are all part of a shared bundle for calls and data, with only 'out of bundle' usage resulting in additional costs.

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[1].

Yours sincerely,

███████

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

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