



[REDACTED]

21 November 2024

Dear [REDACTED]

Freedom of Information request: FOI2024/00882

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 26 September in which you requested the following:

Your request:

Could you please provide the transcript of a recent 'inclusion community event' held in July this year, particularly the speech by the CEO and any responses to bullying questions.

It's in the public interest to understand the scale of bullying within in organisation, and to understand any attempts by senior leadership to address it.

Our response

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

An Inclusion Community Event was held internally within UKRI on 22 July 2024. It involved the UKRI Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and members from UKRI's Equality Diversity and Inclusion advocates network. The event was held to discuss equality, diversity and inclusion within UKRI in a closed environment, with an explicit commitment to confidentiality, in order to encourage an open and candid discussion.

We have identified an uncorrected and unedited transcript from the event is held, which is considered to be within the scope of your request. The transcript was generated live by the video conferencing software used during the event, which was delivered as hybrid meeting, with participants in the room and online. It is a raw and unedited transcript; it has not been corrected and contains substantial number of errors and inaccuracies, which reflect the poor quality of the audio at the event.

In considering the information in scope, we have determined that the information should be withheld from disclosure in its entirety under Section 36, prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs, in accordance with the FOI Act.

The information has been withheld under the following limbs of this exemption:

- Section 36(2)(b)(i) – inhibition of the free and frank provision of advice
- Section 36(2)(b)(ii) – inhibition of the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation
- Section 36(2)(c) – disclosure would otherwise prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs.

Section 36 - prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs

For sections 36(2)(b)(i) and (ii), and 36(2)(c), the opinion of UKRI's CEO, as UKRI's Qualified Person, was sought on engaging this exemption. As this is a qualified exemption, we were then required to consider the public interest both in favour of, and against, releasing the information.

Outcome of consideration of Section 36

As UKRI's Qualified Person, Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser confirmed her opinion that sections 36(2)(b)(i), 36(2)(b)(ii), and 36(2)(c) of the FOIA would be engaged, as disclosure would inhibit the free and frank provision of advice, the exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation, and would prejudice the effective conduct of UKRI.

Her view was that disclosure would seriously undermine trust among staff if the commitment to keep discussions confidential was broken, which would in turn undermine the purpose of the inclusion community event, which is key to UKRI's success.

Section 36 is a qualified exemption, which requires the consideration of a public interest test setting out arguments for and against the release into the public domain of the information requested.

The Public Interest Test

As Section 36 is a qualified exemption, a test was required to determine whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs public interest in disclosure. The public interest test was conducted by a senior manager, who was not directly involved in the discussions that were the subject of your request.

Factors in favour of releasing the information:

- Disclosure of this information may increase transparency and public understanding about UKRI and the issues raised by its staff. However, the transcript is of very low quality and may mis-represent the discussion that took place.

Factors against releasing the information:

- Inclusion at UKRI is key to the effective conduct of public affairs. It is in the public interest for UKRI to operate as effectively and efficiently as possible in the deployment of public funds, maximising the value generated for the public. Maintaining a trusted safe space for open, free and frank dialogue between staff and senior leadership, particularly in the context of how to ensure that the expertise of all staff is valued and included, enables and empowers UKRI to manage resources efficiently and effectively, and adapt to changing circumstances, in turn enabling UKRI to fulfil its objectives and serve the public effectively over time.
- A safe space encourages open communication among staff members, fostering an environment where individuals feel comfortable expressing their thoughts without fear of judgment or retaliation. By providing a space for employees to voice their concerns and personal experiences in relation to EDI, UKRI aims to identify where further improvements can be made so it can take proactive steps to address the issues raised. Discussing issues such as inequality and discrimination, can be highly sensitive and emotive, and providing a safe space for individuals to express their experiences so that the wider organisation can learn, adapt, and support the continuous improvement of culture and behaviours is vital to the successful delivery of any EDI initiatives within the organisation.
- UKRI believes that when employees are and feel heard and valued, they are more likely to be engaged and satisfied with their work. Providing a safe space for EDI issues to be openly discussed surfaces important insights, which can be captured to support both effective working and wellbeing, leading to better outcomes and higher levels of job satisfaction and productivity.
- A safe space encourages diversity of thought and perspective, which is essential for innovation and creativity within an organisation. By actively seeking input from employees with different backgrounds and experiences, organisations can make more informed decisions and better serve their diverse stakeholder community.
- This safe space for communication enables issues and conflicts, which inevitably arise in all organisations, to be addressed in a constructive, engaged manner. Enabling employees to openly discuss their concerns

and work towards finding mutually beneficial solutions, can prevent conflicts escalating and disrupting the work environment.

UKRI have concluded that at this time the balance of the public interest lies in favour of applying the above exemptions and withholding the requested information from disclosure.

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,


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Information Rights Team
UK Research and Innovation
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¹ <https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/contact-us/make-a-complaint/#skipnav-target>