



July 2020

Freedom of Information Request Reference N^o: FOI 002095/20

I write in connection with your request for information received by the Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies on the 19th June 2020 in which you sought access to the following information:

I am writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request the following from your finance systems and Accounts Payable department:

Invoice payment performance data for financial years 18/19 and 19/20:

- 1 How many invoices were paid late (actual number rather than %) and what is the total value of invoices paid late?
- 2 Is this split out by sector / category or can you identify SME suppliers that have been paid late? If so, what are the volumes values?
- 3 How many claims have you processed for late payment of invoices? How many claims were successful and how many were rejected (and for what reason)? (Volumes and values of claims)
- 4 Do you have a documented process for late payment claims? If so, is this published and can it be shared? In the absence of a process, where should late payment claims be submitted?

I am aware that many councils may publish a summary of their payment performance as required by the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. I am seeking the transaction detail that sits behind this.

This information should be readily available from your finance systems but if there are any difficulties in producing or sending the data please advise and I will provide any assistance necessary. I have provided a table that may help to present this information back.

Response to your Request

The response provided below is correct as of 9th July 2020.

Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies have considered your request and our response is below.

When responding to a request for information under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act (2000), a public authority is not obliged to provide information, if the authority estimates that the cost of the retrieval of the information requested, would be in excess of £450 (equivalent to 18 hours work).

The costs criteria relates to a request in its entirety, which means that if we cannot retrieve *all* of the information requested within the costs limit, we are not obliged to retrieve *any* of the information requested.

The Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies estimate that to retrieve all of the information you have requested would exceed cost in excess of £450 per force.

Across the two Constabularies, an average of approximately 4,300 invoices have been paid after the due date, each year. In order to provide the total value of these invoices, we would need to review in the region of 28,000 lines of data. This would exceed 36 hours.

This would therefore exceed the appropriate limit for dealing with Freedom of Information requests, in terms of costs, and therefore Section 12(1) of the Freedom of Information Act applies.

Section 12(1) of the Freedom of Information Act states that a public authority is not obliged to:

“...comply with a request for information if the authority estimates that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the appropriate limit”.

The Freedom of Information (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004, defines the ‘appropriate limit’ for Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies as £450, and specifies that this sum equates to 18 hours work at a standard rate of £25 per hour, per force.

In accordance with Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act (2000), this serves as a Refusal Notice for your request.

Advice & assistance

Although excess cost removes Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies obligations under the Freedom of Information Act, as a gesture of goodwill, I have supplied information, relevant to your request, which was retrieved or available before it was realised that the fees limit would be exceeded. I trust this is helpful, but it does not affect our legal right to rely on the fees regulations for the remainder of your request.

Q1 The below figures show the total number of invoices paid, those paid after and those before the due date and the average number of days taken to pay invoices throughout each financial year.

It should be noted that a late payment will be counted for any payment that is 1 day or more over the due date. A payment made after the due date can be due to issues on the supplier side.

Constabulary	Total Invoices Paid	Number Paid After Due Date	Paid Before Due	Average Payment Days
2018/19				
NORFOLK	16,698	6,346	10,352	33
SUFFOLK	11,196	2,189	9,007	30
2019/20				
NORFOLK	16,693	5,471	11,222	30
SUFFOLK	11,992	3,476	8,516	29

Q2 This information is not split into categories on the AP system.

Q3 No late payment claims.

Q4 The Constabularies comply with Government Guidelines with regard to the late payment claims process. These can be accessed via the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/late-commercial-payments-interest-debt-recovery>