

Reference Number : DAERA/26-609



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

An Roinn

**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

Department of

Fairmin, Environment

Veterinary Service Animal Health Group
Information Communication Branch

[REDACTED]

Via Email:

[REDACTED]

VSAHG Information Communications Branch
1st Floor
Jubilee House
111 Ballykelly Road
Limavady
BT49 9HP

Email: vsinfocommsbranch@daera-ni.gov.uk

27 August 2026

Dear [REDACTED]

Freedom of Information Act 2000

Thank you for your email received by the Department on 13 August 2026 which you sought the information in bold below.

I can advise that the Department has completed its search and confirm that it holds the information you requested.

1. **Any policy, guidance, framework, methodology or business rules relied upon in determining that a 25% salary deduction is appropriate for staff participating in the current industrial action;**
3. **Any generic duty-mapping, weighting, assessment or evaluation framework used to determine the proportion of salary to be deducted;**

To reach a reasonable assessment of the impact of the breach of contract caused by partial performance the Department engaged in an assessment of the significance of the duty within the role. Those roles were given percentage weightings considering whether the duty is a core function of the role, the operational consequences of withdrawal of the duty and the extent to which delivery of statutory or regulatory responsibilities relies upon the duty being performed. Higher weightings were allocated to duties which formed part of a primary statutory, regulatory, or operational purpose of the role while lower weightings were allocated to administrative duties.

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The department initially considered whether it was feasible to apply precise deductions on a daily basis but determined that it was not possible to implement in practice and would lead to a much greater risk of error for both the department and staff. Further, the administrative burden in doing so would greatly add to the loss being suffered by the Department.

In those circumstances, the Department then considered what on a daily basis would be the average work withheld and the percentage applicable and determined that a reasonable minimum across all of the cohorts was 25%.

The result of the above assessment exercise conducted by management is set out in **Annex A**.

Considering the value of the work being withheld across all staff member cohorts, which was significant per the above assessment, it is the Department's view that it is suffering far in excess in terms of damage than 25% of a staff members daily pay. It has applied the 25% deduction as a reasonable minimum.

2. **Any guidance or instructions issued to managers, HR staff, payroll staff or decision-makers concerning the calculation or application of salary deductions arising from action short of strike;**
4. **Any internal discussions, assessments, reports, business cases, governance papers, recommendations, briefing papers or decision-making records supporting the adoption of a 25% deduction;**
5. **Any centrally issued correspondence, instructions or guidance concerning the implementation of salary deductions in connection with the current industrial action.**

In relation to 2,4 and 5 the Department has decided not to disclose some of the information as it is being withheld under the following exemptions of the Freedom of Information Act:

- Section 42 – Information subject to legal professional privilege
- Section 40(2) – Third party information of which the requester is not the subject

Some of the information requested is related to legal and professional privilege and so Section 42 exemption applies. In these instances, the Department is legislatively required to consider the public interest in disclosure. An associated Public Interest Test has been conducted and is attached for your information at **Annex B**.

The Department has also decided some of this information is considered to be third party personal data, of which you are not the data subject. This element has therefore been withheld under Section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act. In these instances, the Department is required to consider if disclosure would breach the first Data protection Principle which states that processing must be lawful, fair and transparent. I have carried out a Lawful, fairness and Transparency test, which is attached at **Annex C**.

The information that can be released for questions 2,4 and 5 are attached as **Doc 1-11**.

If you require any clarification, believe that any part of your request has been overlooked, misunderstood or misinterpreted, please contact me in the first instance to see if it is a matter that can be resolved.

If you are unhappy with the way your request for information has been handled or the decision to release/withhold information, you have the right to request a formal review by the Department. If you wish to do so, please contact The Review Section either by e-mailing daera.informationmanager@daera-ni.gov.uk or by post at The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Data Protection & Information Management Branch, Floor 2, Jubilee House, 111 Ballykelly Road, Ballykelly, Limavady BT49 9HP, within two months from the date of this letter.

If after such an internal review you are still unhappy with the response, you have the right to appeal to the Information Commissioner at Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, CHESHIRE, SK9 5AF, who will undertake an independent review of the Department's decision.

Yours sincerely,



Veterinary Service Animal Health Group

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