

FOI Request (received 13 June 2025) - Reference: DFI/2025-0267

I would like to request the following:

For any year that the Council/Department has received Full Dispersal funding in relation to migrants from the Executive Office, please outline the total amount received each year and a breakdown of spending arising from the funding, where applicable, naming any third parties that were funded as a result.

Response (issued 11 July 2025)

Thank you for your email dated 13 June 2025 requesting, under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI), the following information held by the Department:

For any year that the Council/Department has received Full Dispersal funding in relation to migrants from the Executive Office, please outline the total amount received each year and a breakdown of spending arising from the funding, where applicable, naming any third parties that were funded as a result.

In response to your request, I can confirm that the Department received Full Dispersal funding to deliver a pilot providing asylum seekers living in Northern Ireland with free travel on Translink services for a six-month period. The Pilot's main aim was to support efforts to disperse asylum seekers across Northern Ireland.

1. The total amount received each year

2023/24 - £1.203m

2. A breakdown of spending arising from the funding, where applicable

I can confirm that the Department does hold information related to this part of the request. As FOI relates to public rights of access to information, I must consider whether information is suitable for release to the world at large, and not solely to the applicant.

Section 43(2) of the FOIA exempts information whose disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any legal person (an individual, a company, the public authority itself or any other legal entity).

The information you requested includes pricing/commercial details relating to the pilot, in particular the cost of the travel cards used as part of the pilot. Disclosure of this information would allow the public, in particular economic competitors, to identify commercial rates/discounts and there is a risk that release of sensitive information of this

nature could create a competitive advantage for competitors and prejudice the ability of third parties to negotiate in a commercial environment. Therefore, we have concluded the release of the information would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of Translink, and that Section 43(2) (commercial interests) of the FOIA is engaged.

Having concluded the Section 43(2) (commercial interests) exemption of the FOIA is engaged we have considered the balance of the public interest. We recognise that there is a strong public interest in organisations operating with openness and transparency.

However, this needs to be weighed against the public interest in protecting commercial interests and strong competition. We deem information relating to pricing of the cards used as part of the pilot to be highly sensitive and would be useful to Translink's competitors or commercial customers. In addition, disclosing sensitive pricing information may well cause Translink to decline to provide quotes for future bespoke projects such as this (if they believe that the details of their pricing information will be made public). This could jeopardise future pilots and mean that work in this area cannot be progressed, which would not be in the public interest. Therefore, I am satisfied that the public interest is best served by withholding this information.

3. Any third parties that were funded as a result

Translink;

Global Connects;

Red Cross;

Mears; and

NISRA.

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