



HM Revenue  
& Customs

Taila Hewitt  
By email: [researchers@bigbrotherwatch.org.uk](mailto:researchers@bigbrotherwatch.org.uk)

Freedom of Information Team  
S1715  
6 Floor  
Central Mail Unit  
Newcastle Upon Tyne  
NE98 1ZZ

**Email** [foi.request@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:foi.request@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk)

**Web** [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

Date: 30<sup>th</sup> April 2018  
Our ref: FOI2018/00744

Dear Taila Hewitt,

### **Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)**

Thank you for your request, which was received on, for the following information:

Amended in accordance to FOIA request refusal (Ref: FOI2018/00526) to allow for response within time and cost limits.

Please could you provide me with:

a) The number of users currently enrolled with a Voice ID. b) Details regarding the process by which you obtain informed consent of each individual that provides Voice ID. c) Information about the process for an individual to opt out of Voice ID. d) The number of users who have opted out of Voice ID in the 30 days prior to processing the response to this FOIA request as per the records you have readily available. (We would be most grateful to be notified of a date when the report is available to generate data of all who have opted out of the Voice ID system.) e) An explanation of the erasure process for an individual who provided Voice ID and now wishes to withdraw and use an alternative method of account verification.

I can confirm that HMRC holds some of the information falling within the scope of your request.

A copy of the information is enclosed.

Where more than one request is received for the same or similar information, section 5(2) of the FOI and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004 allows public authorities to aggregate requests and respond to them together I have therefore aggregated your requests as they relate to voice identification.

#### **a) The number of users currently enrolled with a Voice ID**

As of 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2018 5.1m customers were enrolled with a Voice ID.

#### **b) Details regarding the process by which you obtain informed consent of each individual that provides Voice ID.**

HMRC currently operates VoiceID on the basis of the implied consent of the customer, but is developing a new process which will be operated on the basis of the explicit consent of the customer.

**c) Information about the process for an individual to opt out of Voice ID.**

If a customer wishes to opt out of VoiceID they tell an advisor that they wish to opt out and whether they would like their voiceprint to be deleted.

**d) The number of users who have opted out of Voice ID in the 30 days prior to processing the response to this FOIA request as per the records you have readily available. (We would be most grateful to be notified of a date when the report is available to generate data of all who have opted out of the Voice ID system.)**

The number of users who have opted out of VoiceID in the last 30 days is 0.

**e) An explanation of the erasure process for an individual who provided Voice ID and now wishes to withdraw and use an alternative method of account verification.**

Please note, the specific information requested for these contracts have been withheld under FOIA Exemption s31 (1) (a) (prejudice to the prevention or detection of crime).

Disclosure of specific information could potentially be used by individuals for criminal activity; departmental IT systems could be exposed or left vulnerable to interference or attack.

Section 31 is a qualified exemption which means if it applies I must consider whether the public interest favours maintaining the exemption.

I accept the public interest in our procedures being transparent and generally understood. This facilitates the proper public scrutiny of our processes and procedures which in turn helps reinforce high standards of performance and governance. On the other hand, disclosure of information that might assist those intent on committing crime is not in the public interest. Anything that puts the running of HMRC at risk could undermine confidence in the tax system and that would not be in the public interest. The information requested could ultimately help criminals in more effectively targeting malicious activity against both our services and our customers. Any resulting damage to our services could prejudice the assessment or collection of tax. It is in the public interest that HMRC is able to assess and collect tax as efficiently as possible, at the least cost to the public purse and the minimum of additional burden to taxpayers at large.

So, on balance, I conclude that the public interest favours maintaining the exemption.

If you are not satisfied with this reply you may request a review within 2 months by emailing [foi.review@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:foi.review@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk), or by writing to the address at the top right side of this letter.

If you are not content with the outcome of an internal review, you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office. Their contact details are available at their website: [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk).

Yours sincerely,

Freedom of Information Team