



National Audit Office

The UK's independent public spending watchdog

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Reference FOI-1700

Date 21 March 2024

VIP LANE PPE REFERRALS

Thank you for your request of 6 March 2024 for information relating to the National Audit Office's (NAO)'s report [Investigation into government procurement during the COVID-19 pandemic](#) published 26 November 2020. You asked for information about referrals of leads by government officials to the high-priority lane. Your request was considered in accordance with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

Having reviewed our records, I can confirm that we do not hold the information you have requested within the scope of the request.

The Department for Health and Social Care has published further information regarding the governments PPE procurement during the pandemic, and referral leads received through 'The High Priority Lane'. Details of the supplier, and the referrer can be found here [PPE procurement in the early pandemic - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ppe-procurement-in-the-early-pandemic).

Your specific request has been reproduced under **Annex A** for your reference. **Annex B** sets out the steps you may wish to take if you are not satisfied with the way we have handled your request for information under the FOIA.

I hope the information above is useful.

Yours sincerely

NAO FOI team

Annex A

Request for information about referrals to government's high-priority lane for the procurement of PPE (Your request is in italic below)

Dear National Audit Office,

Please can you answer the following request:

BACKGROUND INFO:

According to the NAO report published in November 2020 regarding PPE procurement: The cross-government PPE team established a high-priority lane to assess and process PPE leads given to them by government officials, ministers' offices, MPs and members of the House of Lords, senior NHS staff and other health professionals.

A total of 493 suppliers came through this lane, of which 47 were awarded contracts.

Fewer than 250 sources for these leads were recorded: 144 leads came from the private offices of ministers, including referrals from MPs who had gone to ministers with a possible manufacturer in their constituency and where private individuals had written to the minister or the private office with offers of help; 64 leads were direct from MPs or members of the House of Lords not in government; 21 leads were from officials, such as a Department of International Trade network that was looking for sources worldwide, and the private office of the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Health & Social Care; and three leads were from other identified sources that did not fall into the categories above

See page 28 of the following report: <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Investigation-into-government-procurement-during-the-COVID-19-pandemic.pdf>

MY REQUEST:

1 - Please provide the names of the ministers offices and MP's that provided the 144 leads referred to above. Please also provide the name of the supplier they were referring.

2 - Please provide the names of the MP's or members of the House of Lords that provided a further 64 leads referred to above. Please also provide the name of the supplier they were referring.

Annex B

Statement of Policy

Our policy is to respond to requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 as helpfully and promptly as possible, having regard to the principles set out in the Act. I therefore hope you are happy with the way we have handled your request. If you are not, then you should take the following steps.

In the first instance, within 40 working days, write to the National Audit Office Freedom of Information (FOI) Team at FOI.requests@nao.org.uk or by post to:

FOI Team, Green 2, National Audit Office, 157-197 Buckingham Palace Road, London, SW1W 9SP.

The Head of FOI will arrange a review, which will be conducted by a senior member of staff who was not involved in decisions relating to your original request. Once the review has been completed, we will write informing you of the outcome. If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The primary way of escalating your concerns to the Information Commissioner is at: www.ico.org.uk/foicomplaints. Alternatively, you can contact the ICO at [Contact us | ICO](#) or Information Commissioner's Office Wycliffe House Water Lane Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5AF.