



Information Policy & Compliance  
[bbc.co.uk/foi](http://bbc.co.uk/foi)

03 April 2008

Dear

**Freedom of information request – RFI20080243**

Thank you for your request received by the BBC on 10 March 2008 seeking further information about TV Licensing. Your request is being dealt with under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("the Act").

Please note that "TV Licensing" is a trading name used by companies contracted by the BBC to administer the collection of television licence fees and enforcement of the television licensing system. The majority of the administration of TV Licensing is contracted to Capita Business Services Ltd (which undertakes the majority of the administration of the TV Licensing system), with the administration of our cash related payment schemes contracted to Revenues Management Services Ltd (RMS). PayPoint Network Ltd and PayPoint Collections Ltd are contracted to provide over-the-counter services. The marketing and public relations activities are contracted to the AMV Consortium. The consortium is made up of the following four companies: Abbott Mead Vickers BBDO Ltd, Fishburn Hedges Boys Williams Limited, PHD Media Limited and Proximity London Ltd. The BBC is a public authority in respect of its television licensing functions and retains overall responsibility.

In your request you asked the following (I have numbered your questions for ease of reference):

1. *How many people have been 'caught' without a TV licence in the past twelve months, or the latest period for which figures are available?*

I have answered all your questions with reference to the last calendar year, i.e. 2007. If you require information regarding other time periods, eg the last financial year, please let me know and I will be happy to revisit this response.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

I assume by your first question that you are referring to the number of people from whom prosecution statements have been taken. The figures for evaders who were caught across the UK and broken down by nation during 2007 are as follows:

Location	Number of evaders caught
England	291857
Scotland	82408
N Ireland	18541
Wales	20858
<b>Total</b>	<b>413664</b>

2. *How many fines have been issued and what is the total value of those fines?*

Although you specifically mention the Freedom of Information Act in your request, information is exempt under section 21(1) of this Act if it constitutes information which is accessible to the applicant by other means. In relation to your particular question, official statistics on the number of fines which have been issued and the total value of those fines are retained by the Home Office. At various points these statistics have been made public, particularly in relation to questions asked in Parliament (which are available in Hansard) and other government publications.

3. *What is the total value of fines collected?*

This information is not held by the BBC. Once a fine is issued by a court, these funds are collected by the court itself and not the BBC or TV Licensing. Her Majesty's Court Service is the body with official responsibility for collecting information on such fines. Official figures are thus published by the Home Office.

4. *How many enforcement officers are employed by the TV Licensing agency?*

Capita is charged with carrying out enforcement activities on behalf of the Licensing Authority (though the BBC retains responsibility for policies). Thus, these officers are employed by Capita.

I can confirm that the BBC does also hold information relating to this part of your request. However, I am withholding this information under sections 31(1)(a),(b),(d) and (g) and (2)(a) of the Act which relate to law enforcement, specifically on the grounds that disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the prevention or detection of crime, the apprehension or prosecution of offenders, the collection of the licence fee and the BBC's ability to discharge its public functions in respect of such matters.

I am satisfied in terms of section 2(2) of the Act that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. I have provided further explanation of my consideration of the public interest test in the section 'Why information has been withheld' below.

5. How much was spent on 'enforcement' by the TV Licensing Agency in the last twelve months, or the latest period for which figures are available?

The answers to your questions are contained in the enclosed document, *TV Licensing Costs of Collection*. As you will see, this contains details of the licence fee revenue, total costings and a breakdown of collection costs.

### **Why information has been withheld**

I am required under s 2(2) of the Act to assess whether the public interest in maintaining the exemptions outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

The following factors are in favour of disclosure:

1. ensuring that public funds are being appropriately applied, that is:
  - a. ensuring that the TV Licensing system is being efficiently run; and
  - b. ensuring that value for money is being obtained.

I consider that the above public interest factors in favour of disclosure are served by the following:

1. The BBC has a duty to enforce the television licensing system and it is essential that effective deterrents against evasion are maintained for this purpose. Without an effective deterrent, evasion would invariably increase. This would be to the detriment of the honest majority of people who are properly licensed and to the overall amount of revenue available to the BBC. It would also increase detection costs.
2. The Office of Surveillance Commissioners is an independent body which monitors the BBC's compliance with legislation regarding detection, hence the public interest in people not being unfairly subject to detection is satisfied.
3. The BBC is required to satisfy the National Audit Office ('NAO') as to the value for money of the collection and enforcement arrangements and is accountable for the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of such arrangements. NAO's most recent audit is published at [http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/nao\\_reports/06-07/0607183.pdf](http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/nao_reports/06-07/0607183.pdf).
4. The BBC has reduced the cost of collection from 6.2% of the total licence fee collected in 1991/2, when it took over from the Home Office, to 4.1% for the financial year 06/07. This demonstrates that the TV Licensing system is being efficiently run. This and further related information is available in the BBC's annual report (see [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)), the TV Licensing Annual Review and the *About TV Licensing* document (see <http://www.tvlicensing.co.uk/aboutus/index.jsp>).

In this instance, the public interest is served by maintaining an effective deterrent to licence fee evasion and thus in turn protecting the BBC's revenue stream.

There is hence a greater public interest in ensuring the effective collection of the licence fee than in disclosing the information you have sought. I am therefore satisfied, in terms of section 2 of the Act, that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

## **Appeal rights**

If you are not satisfied with this response you have the right to an internal review by a BBC senior manager or legal adviser. Please contact us at the address provided, explaining what you would like us to review and including your reference number. If you are not satisfied with the internal review, you can appeal to the Information Commissioner. The contact details are: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF, telephone 01625 545 700 or see <http://www.ico.gov.uk/>

I hope this response is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

**Natalie Saunderson**  
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**BBC TV Licensing Management Team**