



Ministry of JUSTICE

Data Access and Compliance Unit
Information Directorate
Ministry of Justice
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Date Lost

Our Ref: 57952

Dear Mr Thackeray

Freedom of Information Request

Thank you for your email of 20/02/09 in which you asked for the following information from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ).

Criminon UK Ltd is a charity which delivers correspondence courses to prisoners in the UK prisons. It is linked to Scientology.

1 a: Are prison officers permitted to promote this programme to prisoners?

1 b: If so, please provide a list of individuals and occasions on which this has occurred, in the last 5 years.

2 a: Are representatives of Criminon UK Ltd permitted to promote their programme to prisoners, within prisons?

2 b: If so, please provide a list of occasions on which this has occurred, in the last 5 years.

3 a: Does Criminon UK Ltd donate written or audiovisual materials such as books, leaflets, posters, DVDs, videos, CDs, tapes, or mp3s to prisons?

3 b: If so, please provide a list of occasions on which this has occurred, in the last 5 years.

Your request has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

I can confirm that no records are held for part b of questions 1,2 and 3. The information in relation to part a of questions 1,2 and 3 is below.

Criminon is a secular arm of the Church of Scientology. It is a Scientology-based course which aims to reduce re-offending, with particular emphasis on drug misuse.

Whilst Criminon claim to have been providing a programme to prisoners in England and Wales, the National Offenders Management Service (NOMS) do not endorse or fund Criminon.

NOMS drugs strategy is designed to offer a comprehensive range of interventions to address the varying needs of prisoners with a drug problem:

- Clinical management of substance misuse – detoxification or maintenance;
- Counselling, Assessment, Referral, Advice and Throughcare services (CARATs) – specialist support that, following assessment, deliver psychosocial interventions, treatment and support; and
- Intensive drug treatment programmes.

All prison drug treatment options need to fit clearly into this framework. An assessment by NOMS of a Criminon correspondence course concluded that in its current form it would not qualify as an accredited or validated programme and therefore falls outside of the NOMS treatment framework.

NOMS is aware that Criminon periodically attempt to recruit prisoners and have offered prisons courses, sometimes free of charge. Prison staff have been provided with guidance stressing that interventions offered in prisons must be compatible with the existing treatment strategy and fit for purpose.

NOMS is aware of a number of cases where prisoners have engaged in correspondence with Criminon. Rules concerning prisoners' access to letters contain the presumption that correspondence will not generally be restricted or stopped unless the restriction is a proportionate response (i.e. a threat to national security, prevention of crime etc). Legal advice is that letters from Criminon do fall into this category and therefore should not be withheld from the prisoner to whom they are addressed. Such cases are likely to be the source of claims made by Criminon about the prisons they "operate" in. Prison staff have been advised to guide any prisoners who have been contacted by Criminon toward a CARATs referral. This will provide an opportunity for the prisoner to engage with the validated framework for drug treatment and support.

As part of our obligations under the FOIA, the Ministry of Justice has an independent review process. If you are dissatisfied with this decision, you may write to request an internal review. The internal review will be carried out by someone who did not make the original decision, and they will re-assess how the Department handled the original request.

If you wish to request an internal review, please write or send an email to the Data Access and Compliance Unit within two months of the date of this letter, at the following address:

Data Access and Compliance Unit
Information Directorate
Ministry of Justice
1st Floor, Zone 1C
Postal Point 1.41
102 Petty France
London

SW1H 9AJ

e-mail: xxxx.xxxxxx@xxxxxxx.xxx.xxx.xx

If you remain dissatisfied after an internal review decision, you have the right to apply to the Information Commissioner's Office under Section 50 of the FOIA. You can contact the Information Commissioner's Office at the following address:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Internet: https://www.ico.gov.uk/Global/contact_us.aspx

Yours sincerely

Paul Hunt
Data Access & Compliance Unit