

Mr Thomas
Information Commissioner
Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
WILMSLOW, Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Friday 7 May 2010

Dear Sir

re: Freedom of Information Act requests to the Home Office - Madeleine McCann

On 19 March I asked the Home Office the following questions (full letter reproduced below):

+++++

From: Anthony Bennett
Tel: 01279 635789
e-mail: ajsbenett@btinternet.com

66 Chippingfield
HARLOW
Essex
CM17 0DJ

Home Office
Head of Freedom of Information Act Section
Direct Communications Unit
2 Marsham Street
LONDON
SW1P 4DF

Friday 19 March 2010

By e-mail to public.enquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk
And by hard copy

Dear Sir/Madam

re: Questions to the Home Office Freedom of Information Act Section - Involvement by the Home Office with the McCanns regarding a possible review or re-investigation into the disappearance of Madeleine McCann

During the past two weeks, several newspapers have referred to the following matters in relation to the Madeleine McCann case:

- a) one or more meetings between Home Secretary Alan Johnson and the McCanns
- b) several meetings between the McCanns and staff of the Home Office
- c) the commencement of a 'scoping exercise' to evaluate what form any review or re-investigation into Madeleine's disappearance may take
- d) the appointment of the Chief Executive of the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre, Mr Jim Gamble, to advise the Home Office as to which police force should carry out any review or re-investigation
- e) the reported decision by Jim Gamble and the Home Office to appoint West Yorkshire Police to carry out a review or re-investigation.

It is evident that there remains huge public interest in and beyond the U.K. in what really happened to Madeleine McCann, which was described as recently as 19 February by the McCanns' chief public relations adviser, Mr Clarence Mitchell, as 'a complete mystery. The clear public interest will therefore be served by your section providing full answers as soon as possible to the following questions under the Freedom of Information Act. We would add that the answers to these questions must be readily available to officials and so the cost of providing them should be minimal. Here are the questions:

1. On what date or dates has the Home Secretary Alan Johnson had meetings with one or both of the McCanns?
2. Who else was present at these meetings: in particular, was any lawyer or other adviser for the McCanns present?
3. On what dates did meetings take place between one or both of the McCanns and staff of the Home Office?
4. Please identify all the staff who met with the McCanns and again identify whether the McCanns had legal or other representatives with them.
5. On what date did the McCanns first approach the Home Office asking for a review or re-investigation by a British police force into Madeleine's disappearance?
6. Is the Home Office carrying out what the Daily Telegraph called 'a scoping exercise' to evaluate what form any review or re-investigation into Madeleine's disappearance may take' and, if so, on what date did that scoping exercise commence?
7. Why, according to the press, was Chief Executive of the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre, Mr Jim Gamble, given the role of advising the Home Office as to which police force should carry out any review or re-investigation?
8. On what date did the Home Secretary ask Mr Gamble to perform this role?
9. On what date did Mr Gamble make his recommendation?
10. Did he, as reported, recommend West Yorkshire Police to carry out a review or re-investigation?
11. Has West Yorkshire Police, as reported, been asked to carry out a review or re-investigation into the disappearance of Madeleine McCann?
12. If so, what is the brief or remit that the Home Office has given to West Yorkshire Police?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Bennett

+++++

On 21 April the Home Office said it needed more time to answer the questions because they needed 'more time to consider the public interest test'.

It is now 32 working days since I made my request and I wish to appeal against their refusal to supply the information requested during the specified 20-day period.

Yours sincerely

Tony Bennett