From: Freedom of Information  
Sent: 16 July 2021 12:42  
To:  
Subject: Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/21/251)

Dear

Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/21/251)

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (FOI) request dated 24 May 2021, reference K/21/251. Please accept our apologies for the delay in responding to your request.

Your request read:

“From September 2018 to September 2020, please provide me with the following information on settlement agreements relating to bullying complaints against staff made by a student or staff member, where the University is making a voluntary severance payment or compensation payment to complainants:
• How many such settlement agreements were made?
• What month and year within the time frame were the agreements made?
• The total amount of money paid by the university in all such settlement agreements within the time frame?
• The amount of money paid by the university for each individual settlement agreement within the time frame if possible?
• How many of these settlements contain a confidentiality clause?”

The University of Leeds holds some information relevant to your request.

University of Leeds uses settlement agreements in a variety of cases regarding staff, such as in voluntary severance. Some of these will contain confidentiality clauses which aim to protect legitimate business interests, e.g. protecting intellectual property, but they are not used to prevent individuals raising concerns and/or pursuing proceedings in relation to harassment, discrimination or other similar matters. We do not use settlement agreements in student-related matters.

We have identified three cases of voluntary severance payments related to bullying within the timeframe of your request. Due to the personal nature of the matters from which these cases arise, and the very small number of cases which have been identified, we are withholding further information under section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act. Section 40(2) sets out that information is exempt from disclosure if it is the personal data of someone other than the person making the request, and disclosure would; contravene the data protection principles; contravene an objection to processing; or if the data is exempt from the right of subject access.

It is essential that when someone raises a complaint with the university, that complaint is handled sensitively and confidentially. There is a well-established expectation that the identity of complainants will remain protected, and not made
public either directly or indirectly. We therefore consider that to release the information you have requested, which would be likely to result in the identification of complainants, would be unfair and would therefore contravene the data protection rights of those same complainants.

We hope this information is helpful. If you have any questions about this email, however, please do not hesitate to contact us on foi@leeds.ac.uk

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to make a complaint or request a review of our decision, you can request an Internal Review. Requests for Internal Review should be made in writing using the following contact information:

Post: Mr D Wardle  
Deputy Secretary  
The University of Leeds  
Leeds  
LS2 9JT

Email: foi@leeds.ac.uk

Requests for Internal Review should be submitted within 40 working days of receiving the University’s response to your request. Further information about how the University manages Freedom of Information requests and about our complaints procedure is also available on our website (www.leeds.ac.uk).

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. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review/complaints procedure provided by the University. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner’s Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely

Chloe Wilkins
Freedom of Information Officer

Secretariat
University of Leeds