

18 March 2020

Our Ref: FOI7111

### **Freedom of Information: Right to know request**

Thank you for your request dated 19 February 2020 received under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 for information about the FCA's Advice Unit.

Your request has been considered and we will respond to each point in turn.

1. *The number of firms that have applied to enter the Advice Unit but were not accepted.*

A total of 30 firms applied to the Advice Unit but were not accepted because they did not meet our eligibility criteria. Details of the criteria can be found [here](#).

2. *The number of firms that were provided feedback but decided not to launch models.*

One firm has been provided with feedback and decided not to launch its model.

3. *The number of applications received to join the Advice Unit, by month, since applications opened.*

In responding to this question, we would like to explain that the Advice Unit was established in May 2016 and initially focussed on the investments, pension and protection sectors. It accepted applications on a cohort basis with two application windows, one from May to July 2016 and the other from January to February 2017.

The table below shows the number of applications received for each cohort:

<b>Cohort</b>	<b>Applications received</b>
Cohort 1* (31 May 2016 to 1 July 2016)	21
Cohort 2 (3 January 2017 to 3 February 2017)	17

*\*(Note: two firms withdrew during the application process. One firm was accepted after the window closed following a referral from another of Innovate's firm support services.)*

In June 2017, the application process changed so that it now accepts applications from firms throughout the year. The scope of the Advice Unit also expanded to include the mortgages, debt and general insurance sectors, as well as models looking to provide guidance instead of regulated advice.

The table below shows the number of applications received broken down by month since June 2017:

<b>Month</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
January		1	4	0
February		1	7	
March		3	3	
April		4	2	
May		3	1	
June	1	6	5	
July	6	5	1	
August	3	3	3	
September	2	4	1	
October	4	0	0	
November	0	3	1	
December	0	1	3	

4. *The total cost of the Advice Unit to date and the staff headcount that currently resources it.*

The total cost of the Advice Unit from inception is approximately £1m, this is made up of Salary, Flexible Benefits, Pension and National Insurance from 31 May 2016 to January 2020.

The current headcount for the team is 3.8 full time employees.

If you are unhappy with this response, you have the right to request an internal review. If you wish to exercise this right you should contact us within 40 working days of the date of this response.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you also have a right of appeal to the Information Commissioner, who can be contacted at:

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

Telephone: 01625 545 700

Website: [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)

Yours sincerely,

Information Disclosure Team