

Office of the Registrar of Consultant Lobbyists

Summary of investigation

February 2020

Organisation or person investigated: The Finsbury Group

Matter(s) investigated: Whether The Finsbury Group failed to declare any consultant lobbying activity on behalf of Huawei Technologies.

Registrar's decision: Whilst Huawei has been a paying client of The Finsbury Group, there is no evidence that the latter conducted consultant lobbying activity for the former within the terms of the legislation.

Summary of rationale for decision: The media article that initially raised questions identified that Huawei was a client of The Finsbury Group, that a senior official within the latter was the brother of a recent UK Government Minister, and that another senior official had stated on social media that they had been advising Huawei on strategy. Whilst these circumstances all create a context in which consultant lobbying that needs to be declared (i.e. personal communication by the consultant with a Minister, Permanent Secretary or equivalent, on behalf of a paying client) might take place, no evidence has been provided that declarable activity did in fact take place. The Finsbury Group explicitly confirmed that no such communications were made by them on behalf of Huawei and the Private Eye article itself reports a similar explicit denial by the Minister in question.

Chronology:

4 February 2020	Office of the Registrar receives email from member of the public, drawing attention to an article in issue 1515 of Private Eye, concerning the role of 'Finsbury PR' in the UK Government's consideration of whether to allow Huawei to be part of the delivery of 5G services in the UK.
5-11 February 2020	Consideration of the article by the Registrar.
12 February 2020	Letters sent to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Private Eye, specifying the statutory requirements relating to consultant lobbying, the role of the Registrar, and requesting any additional information and evidence they may have relating to possible breach of those statutory requirements; and• The Finsbury Group, identifying the article, highlighting statutory requirements on registrants, and requesting a response to the concerns raised by the article.

18 February 2020	Reply from The Finsbury Group, explicitly states: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Huawei was a client of theirs during the relevant period;• The services provided to Huawei did not include personal communications from The Finsbury Group to UK Government Ministers or Permanent Secretaries (or equivalent); and• No such communications had therefore been made on behalf of Huawei since they had been a client of The Finsbury Group.
24 February 2020	Reply from Private Eye, stating that they had no information to provide beyond what was contained in the published article. Registrar determines that there is therefore no evidence of any breach of the statutory requirements.