



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2008-04997

Keyword: Crime

Subject: CHILDREN INVOLVED IN CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

Request:

Under the Freedom of Information Act can I ask are statistics available for the number of children under the age of criminal responsibility who have been brought to the notice of the PSNI for involvement in criminal activity?

Can I request figures for the number of children under the age of criminal responsibility who have been brought to the attention of the PSNI in the last three years broken down into 12-month periods.

Can I also have statistics for the number of youths under the age of 18 who have been referred to the Youth Justice Agency (YJA) by the PSNI for diversionary intervention in the last 12-months.

If possible can these figures be broken down into DCUs (District Command Units) or regions?

Also the type of criminal or anti social behaviour that the youths in question have been involved in to warrant a referral to the YJA.

Answer:

The cost of complying with your request for information would exceed the "appropriate limit" as stated in the Freedom of Information Regulations 2004, which is currently set by the Secretary of State at £450.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland is unable to provide the information requested within the appropriate fees limit as stated by the Secretary of State as the information requested would not be available on the new youth diversion database, which commenced operation in July 2007. To go beyond this point, would require the 28 youth diversion officers throughout Northern Ireland to carry out a time consuming manual trawl of records / files. Records on diversionary disposals should only be held for a maximum of 30 months unless subsequent offending has taken place within the life of the first diversionary disposal. This being the case, records would in the main only go back 30 months, and therefore a manual record would have to commence for those cases beyond July 2007 for the remaining period. This has been estimated at 16 - 18 hours for each youth diversion officer, and then a further collation would have to be carried out by Community Safety Branch which would add at least further 2 hours. This would take in total 560hrs to complete which far exceeds the appropriate fees level of £450 (18 hours) as determined by the Secretary of State under the Freedom of Information (Fees and Appropriate Limit) Regulations 2004.

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this letter should be considered as a Refusal Notice, and the request has therefore been closed.

You may wish to submit a refined request in order that the cost of complying with your request may be facilitated within the 'appropriate limit'. Submission of a refined request would be treated as a new request, and considered in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, including consideration of relevant Part II exemptions.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland has also considered whether we can be of any assistance in terms of helping you

refine your request to bring it under the cost limit. The options are:

Option 1. The PSNI Statistics Unit, who only hold data on crime and not offenders, could provide the number of crimes that have been cleared by means of 'Offender Under Age of Criminal Responsibility'. **However**, from the 1st April 2007, this is no longer a valid clearance so the information would only be available for the financial years prior to 2007/08. The unit does not hold any information regarding references to the YJA.

Option 2. The Youth Diversion Database could provide the number of young people referred in general and for what reason, but not specify the individual agencies concerned, due to the high number of agencies / groups involved. It could also possibly provide an **indication** as to the type of behaviours for referral, but again, not for individual agencies.

The PSNI would also like to make you aware that it is anticipated that the information requested will form part of the Chief Constables report for the period 2008 - 09 which will be published next year.

If you have any queries regarding your request or this decision please do not hesitate to contact me on 028 9070 0164. When contacting the Freedom of Information Team, please quote the reference number listed at the beginning of this email.

If you are dissatisfied in any way with the handling of your request, you have the right to request a review. You should do this as soon as possible, or in any case within two months of the date of issue of this letter. In the event that you require a review to be undertaken, you can do so by writing to the Head of Freedom of Information, PSNI Headquarters, 65 Knock Road, Belfast, BT5 6LE or by emailing foi@psni.pnn.police.uk

If following an internal review, carried out by an independent decision maker, you were to remain dissatisfied in any way with the handling of the request you may make a complaint, under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, to the Information Commissioner's Office and ask that they investigate whether the PSNI has complied with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act. You can write to the Information Commissioner at Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. In most circumstances the Information Commissioner will not investigate a complaint unless an internal review procedure has been carried out, however the Commissioner has the option to investigate the matter at his discretion.

Please be advised that PSNI replies under Freedom of Information may be released into the public domain via our website @ <http://www.psni.police.uk/>

Personal details in respect of your request have, where applicable, been removed to protect confidentiality.