



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2008-03708

Keyword: Human Resources

Subject: BLACK AND ETHNIC MINORITY OFFICERS

Request:

Question 1a. For the last five years please list the numbers of police officers serving at each rank on the 1st April for each year.

Question 1b. Please list the number of Muslim officers serving at each rank for the same periods.

Question 1c. Please list the number of Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) officers serving at each rank for the same periods.

Question 2. For the last five years please list the numbers of, a) officers serving; b) Muslim officers serving; and c) BME officers serving in each of the following specialisms on April 1st

- a) CID
- b) Counter-Terrorism
- c) Firearms
- d) Special Branch

Question 3. In each of the last five financial years:

- a) How many officers served in your force?
- b) How many officers resigned from your force? How many officers were dismissed from your force?
- c) How many BME officers resigned from your force? How many BME officers were dismissed from your force?
- d) How many Muslim officers resigned from your force? How many Muslim officers were dismissed from your force?

Answer:

I can confirm that the Police Service of Northern Ireland has now completed its search for the information.

I have today decided to:

disclose the information relating to questions 1a, 1c, 2a, 2c, 3a, 3b and 3c in full;

fully exempt the information relating to questions 2b and 2d pursuant to the provisions of section 31 and 24(1) of the Act.

and that no information is held in relation to questions 1b and 3d.

Response to Q1a. Please find attached information Appendix A

Response to Q1b. The Police Service of Northern Ireland do not hold the information necessary to answer his question.

Under S1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act I am obliged to firstly confirm whether the information you have requested is held by this authority or not. In this case the information to fully answer your request is not held, so it cannot be provided.

There is no requirement to prescriptively gather this information, and in addition to any Data Protection Act breaches, articles 2, 8, 9 and 14 of the Human Rights Act are also relevant. Admittedly, for the purposes of minority monitoring some officers and staff do provide this information on a voluntary basis, although that is an incomplete picture and does not answer your request.

The religion of an individual is defined as 'sensitive personal data' within the Data Protection Act, and even if it were held, a disclosure of that information could only be made if Schedule 3 of that Act applied, which is not the case here.

I should therefore advise you, that not only is all the information you have requested not being provided because it is not held, any subsequent request asking for what has been provided voluntarily would be exempt by virtue of S40(2) of the FOIA. This is a Class Based, Absolute Exemption.

Please be assured that all police employees, be they officers or staff, are vetted at an appropriate level to their role. The vetting process is effective, prescriptive and well established, following national standards and guidelines.

The inference of your request is that religious membership monitoring of staff should be carried out routinely. There is no requirement for this to be a standard procedure for the reasons outlined. There could be a suggestion that these types of questions have racial connotations. The police service does not support any stereotypical views that an individual's religion, beliefs, sexual orientation or gender should in any way be linked to criminal activity, including terrorism.

Response to Q1c. Please find attached information Appendix B

Response to Q2. Please find attached information with regard **a)** CID and **c)** Firearms Appendix C

The information for the numbers of staff actually working full time in **b)** Counter-Terrorism and **d)** Special Branch as mentioned above and explained below, this information requested is exempt by virtue of sections s31(1) Law Enforcement and s24(1) National Security.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Police Service of Northern Ireland, when refusing to provide such information (because the information is exempt) to provide you the applicant with a notice which:

- (a) states that fact,
- (b) specifies the exemption in question and
- (c) states (if not otherwise apparent) why the exemption applies.

The exemption/s, as well as the factors the Department considered when deciding where the public interest lies, are listed below:

S31 Law Enforcement and S24(1) National Security

Both the above exemptions are qualified and prejudice-based and, as such, I am required to evidence the harm in disclosure and apply the public interest test (PIT).

Harm in Disclosure

To produce the number of staff working in this area will be a disclosure of intelligence useful to a terrorist. By mapping the capabilities in various force areas a clear picture can be produced showing where resources are concentrated. If this information was provided over an extended period, terrorist groups could draw conclusions on any increase or decrease in the staffing levels, leading to possible identification of ongoing operations or changes in proactive focus of forces. The

usefulness of this data can be even more impactful when linked to other information gathered from sources by the terrorist. These can include media releases, high profile investigations and the tactical infrastructure of a force area including how many vulnerable premises, points of entry to the UK and protection liabilities they have. Any incident that results from such a disclosure will then by default effect national security.

Factors Favouring Disclosure.

Accountability

The disclosure of the figures will show that the force takes seriously its counter terrorist functions and resources accordingly.

Public Debate

The information will aid the accuracy of any public debate on whether public money is being invested appropriately and in line with public opinion.

Factors favouring Non-Disclosure

Efficient and Effective Conduct of the Force

Disclosure is likely to compromise the law enforcement capability of the force. Resource information can give an advantage to someone looking to exploit any potential weaknesses in a forces tactical planning. Any increased activity as a result of that either real or perceived weakness will mean the diversion of other resources or a reduction in the capability of the force.

Public Safety

Any disclosure which may increase the risk of harm being caused in the public arena is not desirable. In this case a terrorist being attracted to an area they perceive is less well protected than others will increase the risk of harm to the public. Fear of detection is an important tool in preventing incidents taking place.

Balance

There is a requirement in any public interest test to balance the factors favouring disclosure with those against. The police service is already held to account on how it uses its resources, on behalf of the public, by Police Authorities and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary. Those processes are effective and long standing and are not enhanced by any disclosure in this case.

In the current climate within the UK, no information, which may aid a terrorist, should be provided. Hindsight is a wonderful gift that we are not in possession of at this time. To what extent this information will actually aid a terrorist is unknown, but discretion is our most effective tool. The public entrust the Police to make appropriate decisions with regard to their protection, and the only way of reducing the risk is to be ultra cautious. At this time, in these circumstances, it is undesirable to provide the exact number of officers and staff working specifically in counter terrorism.

Response to Q3a. As per 1(a)

Response to Q3b. Please find attached information Appendix D

Response Q3c. Please find attached information Appendix E

Response to Q3d. As per 1(b)

If you have any queries regarding your request or the 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 all PSNI replies under Freedom of Information will be released simultaneously into the public domain via our website @ www.psni.police.uk

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

Appendix A

April	CC	DCC	ACC	Ch Supt	SUPT	CHINSP	INSP	SERGT	CONST	STU OFF	TOTAL	PSNIF/T	PSNIP/T
2003	1.00	1.00	6.00	31.00	78.00	132.00	390.00	1127.00	5232.00	176.00	7174.00	1779.00	917.00
2004	1.00	1.00	6.00	27.00	75.00	125.50	393.00	1112.00	5426.50	213.00	7380.00	1567.75	858.00
2005	1.00	1.00	5.00	27.00	76.00	106.50	401.00	1113.25	5460.75	272.00	7463.50	1344.50	916.00
2006	1.00	1.00	6.00	25.00	77.00	85.50	437.00	1151.00	5501.00	293.00	7577.50	1001.75	807.00
2007	1.00	1.00	7.00	27.00	76.00	107.50	443.00	1115.50	5489.00	267.00	7534.00	739.00	867.00
2008	1.00	1.00	8.00	26.00	70.00	80.75	432.00	1124.50	5503.50	147.00	7393.75	661.00	836.00

Appendix B

Date	Inspector	Sergeant	Constable	Student Officer	Total
01.04.04	0	1	17	0	18
01.04.05	0	2	16	2	20
01.04.06	0	2	18	1	21
01.04.07	1	4	18	0	23
01.04.08	1	4	22	0	27

Appendix C

Date	CID	Counter Terrorism	Firearms	Special Branch	Total
01.04.04	2		0		
01.04.05	2		0		
01.04.06	1		0		
01.04.07	3		0		
01.04.08	2		0		

s.F24(1)
s.F31

s.F24(1)
s.F31

Appendix D

Financial Year	Dismissed	Resigned
2003/4	10	233
2004/5	5	151
2005/6	9	144
2006/7	7	83
2007/8	14	110
Grand Total	45	721

Appendix E

Date	Resigned	Dismissed	Total
2003/04	3	0	3
2004/05	2	0	2
2005/06	1	0	1
2006/07	0	0	0
2007/08	0	0	0