



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2009-00455

Keyword: Complaints/Discipline

Subject: POLICY RE SUBSTANCE MISUSE

Request and Answer:

The Police Service of Northern Ireland has now completed its search for the information you requested.

The decision has been taken to:

- Fully exempt records in answer to Question 1 pursuant to the provisions of Section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Disclose information in full, in answer to questions 2 and 4 to 6

Section 17(1) 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.

Question 1

Details of the Alcohol and Substance Misuse Policy of the Police Service of Northern Ireland since May 2007 to date. When spoken to you confirmed that your interest is in Substance Misuse only.

Answer

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 it has been decided to refuse access to the information you have requested. Section 21 of the Act provides that information which is reasonably accessible to the applicant by other means is exempt information.

The information you have requested is available from the Police Service of Northern Ireland's Publication Scheme. To access the Substance Misuse Policy on our Publication Scheme please visit our website at;
http://www.psnl.police.uk/policy_directive_1108_substance_misuse.pdf.

I have enclosed a copy of the policy for your convenience.

Question 2

Details of statistics as to how many officers have faced compulsory testing in relation to Alcohol and Substance Misuse Policy since May 2007 to date.

Answer

Since the policy came into operation 120 substance misuse tests have been carried out on officers. (This includes Random and 'With Cause' testing, both of which are compulsory). We do not hold statistics prior to that date.

Question 3

Details of the number of officers who have self-referred to the Occupational Health and Welfare system since may 2007 to date.

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.

There is no electronic database that can be searched for this information. In order to accurately retrieve the information, over 1000 medical records would have to be manually trawled. Due to the nature of the data sought, medical or nursing staff could only carry out this trawl. Allowing approximately 10 minutes search time per file, would result in the cost of complying with your request for information exceeding the "appropriate limit" as stated in the Freedom of Information Regulations 2004, which is currently set by the Secretary of State at £450.

I have considered whether we can be of any assistance in terms of helping you refine your request to bring it under the cost limit. If you were to request a 'dip sample' of a maximum of 100 records, selected randomly, we should be able to retrieve the information within the cost 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.

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.

Question 4

Details of the number of officers being prosecuted for possession and/or supply of Class A drugs since May 2007 to date.

Answer

None.

Question 5

Details of the number of officers being prosecuted for possession and/or supply of Class B drugs since May 2007 to date.

Answer

None.

Question 6

Details of the number of officers being prosecuted for possession and/or supply of Class C drugs since May 2007 to date.

Answer

None.

The term 'being prosecuted' is being interpreted as meaning cases where the Public Prosecution Service has issued a direction to prosecute but the prosecution process has not yet concluded.

It should be noted that in the absence of other evidence, a confirmed positive drug test result will be deemed to be Gross Misconduct and dealt with under internal discipline.

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 letter.

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 @ www.psnipolice.uk

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