



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2009-02917
Keyword: Crime
Subject: CHILD ABDUCTION - 2006 / 9

Request and Answer:

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

I have decided to:

- disclose records to question 1 in full;
- disclose records to question 2 subject to the deletion of information pursuant to the provisions of section 30, 38 and 40 of the Freedom of Information 2000 (the Act).

Question 1

For the past three years; please advise the numbers of abducted children in Northern Ireland.

Answer

36 children have been abducted in Northern Ireland over the last three years.

Question 2

For each child, please advise:-

- the age and gender of the child
- the age and gender of the abductor
- the method of clearance in each case
- the relationship of the abductor to the child in each case
- brief characteristics of the abduction

Answer

Please see attached document.

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:

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

The exemptions, as well as the factors the department considered when deciding where the public interest lies are listed below.

Section 30(1) Investigations
Section 38(1) Health and Safety
Section 40(2) Personal Information

Section 38 is a Prejudiced based exemption and this means it is the Public Authority's responsibility to evidence the harm.

Section 30 and 40 are Class based exemptions and this means the legislators have agreed that there would be harm if this information were released.

All the above exemptions are Qualified exemptions and therefore a Public Interest Test must be carried out.

These tests are listed below:

HARM TEST

This information is given at an individual level with detailed information on each of the victims and offenders. Accompanied with information on the incident (relationship, outline of incident etc) this could be potentially disclosure. On identification of victims, this could affect the mental health of the victim and/or family and on identification of offenders this could harm their health and safety by being subjected to assaults on their person and property.

Releasing this information could lead to individuals being wrongly identified by the community, as they may make the information fit to someone, as they believe to be the case. This could cause innocent members of the public, wrongly identified as abductors, and subjected to assaults on their person and property. The disclosure, publication, and subsequent discussion of information relating to child abductions is invariably, and understandably, emotive due to the nature of these crimes. The occasion, this strength of feeling has escalated to such a degree that both offenders and innocent persons have been targeted by those in our society that feed it is appropriate to take vigilante style action.

The release of this type of information could impact upon current investigations, e.g. a current investigation where the offender is still at large could be undermined if the nature of the abduction was disclosed.

PUBLIC INTEREST TEST

Factors Favouring Disclosure

Accountability - Accountability of the service to how it fulfils their role in dealing with child abductions.

Public Awareness and Debate - Disclosure of this information may assist individuals by raising awareness of issues which may be of relevance to them.

Factors Favouring Non-Disclosure

Effective/Efficient Conduct of the Service – The release of this information could impact upon current investigations.

Interested Third Parties – The possibility of individuals being identified by release, which would be a breach of the Data Protection Principles.

Investigations – To release details of arrests/cautions/charges would be to release details of ongoing police investigations that may be used by individuals as yet undetected to compromise the investigation or pervert the course of justice.

Public Safety – There is a risk of a detrimental effect on the mental health of the victims involved by release of such information or on parents of young children involved which could cause them further undue harm and distress if the details were again brought into the public domain. The reporting and placing of information into the public domain about child abduction crime months after the incident has taken place can also have an effect on victim/family's health and wellbeing by bringing back the trauma and events of the crime. The risk to the safety of offenders if identifiable is also a relevant factor favouring retention.

BALANCING TEST

With minimal factors favouring disclosure and with such considerable factors favouring retention, the public interest therefore falls in favour of non-disclosure of details involving gender and age of both victims and offenders and also the brief characteristics of the offence, as this is the information that may lead to identification of individuals.

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 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.

Offence	Victim		Clearance method	Crime Year	Offender		Offence Characteristics	Relationship
	Gender	Age			Gender	Niche Age		
Child Abduction (By Parent Etc)			Charge	2006/07				Parent
Child Abduction (By Other Person)			Charge	2006/07				Stranger
Child Abduction (By Other Person)			Charge	2006/07				Known to victim
Child Abduction (By Other Person)			Charge	2006/07				Known to victim
Child Abduction (By Other Person)			Adult Caution	2006/07				Known to victim
Child Abduction (By Other Person)				2006/07				
Child Abduction (By Parent Etc)				2006/07				
Child Abduction (By Other Person)				2006/07				
Child Abduction (By Other Person)				2006/07				
Child Abduction (By Parent Etc)				2006/07				
Child Abduction (By Other Person)				2006/07				
Child Abduction (By Other Person)				2006/07				
Child Abduction (By Other Person)				2006/07				
Child Abduction (By Other Person)			Charge	2007/08				Known to victim
Child Abduction (By Other Person)			Charge	2007/08				Stranger
Child Abduction (By Parent Etc)			Charge	2007/08				Parent
Child Abduction (By Parent Etc)			Charge	2007/08				Parent
Child Abduction (By Parent Etc)				2007/08				
Child Abduction (By Other Person)				2007/08				
Child Abduction (By Other Person)				2007/08				
Child Abduction (By Other Person)				2007/08				
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Child Abduction (By Other Person)				2007/08				
Child Abduction (By Other Person)				2007/08				
Child Abduction (By Other Person)			Charge	2008/09				Known to victim
Child Abduction (By Parent Etc)			Charge	2008/09				Parents
Child Abduction (By Other Person)			Charge	2008/09				Aunt
Child Abduction (By Parent Etc)			Charge	2008/09				Parent
Child Abduction (By Other Person)			Charge	2008/09				Known to victim
Child Abduction (By Other Person)			Summons Issued	2008/09				Known to victim

s.F30 **s.F30(1)(c)** **s.F38** **s.F40** **s.F30** **s.F30(1)(c)** **s.F38** **s.F40**
s.F30(1) **s.F30(2)** **s.F38(1)** **s.F40(2)** **s.F30(1)** **s.F30(2)** **s.F38(1)** **s.F40(2)**
s.F30(1)(a) **s.F30(2(b** **s.F38(1)(a)** **s.F40(2)** **s.F30(1)(a)** **s.F30(2(a)** **s.F38(1)(a)** **s.F40(2)**
s.F30(1)(b) **s.F30(2(a)** **s.F38(1)(b)** **s.F40(2)** **s.F30(1)(b)** **s.F30(2(b** **s.F38(1)(b)** **s.F40(2)**

Child Abduction (By Parent Etc)		Summons Issued	2008/09		Parent
Child Abduction (By Other Person)			2008/09		
Child Abduction (By Other Person)			2008/09		
Child Abduction (By Other Person)			2008/09		
Child Abduction (By Other Person)			2008/09		
Child Abduction (By Other Person)			2008/09		

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