



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2009-01737

Keyword: Finance

Subject: PAYMENTS TO POLICE INFORMANTS

Request and Answer:

Question

I would like to know the following information relating to the payment of police informants:

Please provide a breakdown for each financial year since 1999-2000 to 2008-2009 of the amount paid by the force to police informants.

If you anticipate that this request will exceed the cost limits I would be grateful if you would provide information for 2008-2009 first and then work backwards until the cost limit is reached.

Answer

This is to inform you that the Police Service of Northern Ireland has now completed its search for the information you requested.

The decision has been taken to disclose the crime figures below as requested in relation to the financial years 2005/2006, 2006/2007, 2007/2008 and 2008/2009.

The figures provided below reflect financial years:

2005/2006	£104,326.00
2006/2007	£160,164.00
2007/2008	£194,671.00
2008/2009	£299,000.00

However, in relation to the financial years 1999/2000, 2000/2001, 2001/2002, 2002/2003, 2003/2004 and 2004/2005 the PSNI does not retain this information in an easily retrievable format. The financial information relating to this aspect of your request was pre computerisation and therefore was recorded manually. A case-by-case search would have to be carried out to ascertain the amount paid to (CHIS) for the above years. To conduct this search would involve a disproportionate amount of resources, which could impact, on the PSNI's ability to deliver a professional service to the community.

Under Section 17 (5) Section 12 has been considered and the cost of complying with this part of 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.

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 PSNI have also considered whether we can be of any assistance in terms of helping you refine your request to bring it under the cost limit however the nature and structure of the information, even for one of the years, is still estimated to be over the cost.

The use of Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS) by the police service is well known and is governed by the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, 2000 (RIPA). In relation to your request, PSNI can disclose that the above amounts are recorded as being spent in the specified financial years by PSNI on the obtaining of information to combat crime as a whole.

The above amounts do not include any payments made to CHIS where funding may have been supplied by exempt bodies.

In addition to the above, and by virtue of the listed exemptions Section 23 (5) (Information supplied by, or relating to, bodies dealing with security matters) and Section 24 (2) (National Security), I can neither confirm nor deny that any further information is held to that withheld under the exemptions listed above.

The police service works in partnership with other agencies in order to combat issues such as terrorism and organised crime. As such, funding and/or assistance may sometimes be provided by bodies listed at section 23(3). In this case, PSNI are unable to confirm or deny whether such funding or assistance has been provided to this service by virtue of section 23 (5) of the act. In addition to this, it is judged that it would be detrimental to the national security of the UK to confirm or deny whether further information is held regarding the recruitment or funding of CHIS for national security purposes. Section 24 is a qualified exemption and I have considered whether the public interest in maintaining the exclusion of the duty to confirm or deny outweighs the public interest in confirming whether or not the PSNI holds further information. PSNI recognises that there is a general public interest in openness and accountability because this increases public trust in and engagement with the police. On the other hand, there is a very strong public interest in safeguarding national security. This interest could only be overridden in exceptional circumstances. I have determined that in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exclusion outweighs the public interest in confirming or denying whether further information is held.

This response should not be taken as evidence that the information you have requested exists or does not exist.

If you have any queries regarding your request or the decision please do not hesitate to contact 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.