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FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2009-02996

Keyword: Human Resources

Subject: STATION ENQUIRY ASSISTANT GRADE SGB 1

Request and Answer:

Question

Exactly what information/data (word for word account) was fed into JEGS to arrive at the current Station Enquiry Assistant grade of SGB1. This information has been repeatedly requested from the SORT team over the past 6 yrs and has always been ignored. Hence the need for FOI.

Answer

HR has advised that the information in the Job Description for SEA was converted into the attached 'SEA Response Summary' and this information/data was fed into the JEGS system.

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 @ <http://www.psni.police.uk/>

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

JOB DESCRIPTION

POST: STATION ENQUIRY ASSISTANT

GRADE: SGB1

DEPARTMENT: N/A

BRANCH: POLICE STATION ENQUIRY OFFICES THROUGHOUT
NORTHERN IRELAND

Date: 29TH August 2008

1. Organisational Position

- 1.1 Most Station Enquiry Assistants (SEAs) report to a Sergeant however there is great variety amongst this group of employees. The range of line managers include: Custody Sergeant; Duty Sergeant; Operational Planning, Call Management Sergeant, Finance officer, Premises / Administration Manager, OCMT Manager, Station Sergeant, Premises Officer, Estates Services, Section Sergeant, Finance Manager, Sector Inspector, Response Sergeant, Call Handling Sergeant and Neighbourhood policing unit.

2. Purpose and Objectives

- 2.1 The SEA is the first point of contact within the Enquiry Office who will respond and provide advice to the public on a wide variety of police related matters. They will also assist Police Officers and Support Staff by ensuring the efficient management of the Enquiry Office.

3. Main Activities

Customer Service

- Receiving members of the public, dealing with a wide range of queries in a professional and courteous manner, providing advice and assistance as necessary.
- Receiving and dealing with telephone calls by answering queries, recording and grading non-emergency calls in line with national call grading standards and/or re-directing as appropriate.
- Controlling entry to the station by visitors & contractors ensuring that all visitors are accompanied as appropriate and contractors have appropriate security clearance.

Internal Support

- Communicating relevant information to police officers to inform and support their decision-making.

- Obtaining details of matters such as crimes/offences and traffic accidents reported by members of the public, logging these details onto relevant shared computer systems for Police Officer action/information.
- Providing assistance and support to all staff within the police station including Police Officers and Support Staff to include; inputting and updating information onto computer systems on their behalf, printing out forms, checking offender files upon request (e.g. bail conditions) and providing advice.
- Liaising with a number of internal (e.g. Central Vehicle Index, Crime Scene Investigators and Premises Officers) and external departments/bodies (e.g. Social Services, Care Homes and The Housing Executive) to provide and gather information.

Systems

- Obtaining and recording information on various computer systems such as lost/found/special property, lost/found animals, key-holders, missing persons and evidence and exhibits.
- Maintaining and logging details of vacant premises, visitors book in the manual registers/logbooks.
- Dealing with the registration and processing of sex offenders and foreign nationals as necessary
- Checking and electronically recording details in relation to production of valid driving licenses, vehicle insurance and excise duty (road tax).
- Completing minor crime reports and updating other documentation as appropriate.
- Recording details of persons reporting as a condition of bail (unless the person has to report specifically to a police officer).
- Receiving, checking and counter-signing applications (e.g. security clearance forms, visa applications) under Data Protection Legislation.
- Processing and handling money, as appropriate, in relation to money warrants, Firearms applications, found money, security clearance applications.

Other

- Undertaking general duties to ensure the efficient running of the Enquiry Office in relation to computerised information, filing and stationery as directed.
- When required, complete witness statements and attend court as a witness to incidents.

NB/ the above reflects the main job duties carried out consistently across all locations, those that have not been included were not considered to have an impact on the grading of the role.

4. Knowledge and Skills

- 4.1 In general, the SEAs agreed that the minimum level of formal qualifications required for the role is a GCSE standard in at least English or equivalent. However it should be noted that this was a standard by which the SEAs would have been recruited from, the analysis of the information enclosed indicates that experience would be a better assessment of the skills required for the role.
- 4.2 Most of the role holders interviewed agreed that length of experience was not important it was the quality and type of this experience. However given the type/quality of experience required for the role it would be expected that those recruited would be unable to gain this experience unless they had 6-12 months relevant work experience. Generally SEAs felt that the role required experience in customer services and dealing with demanding customers in a variety of situations. Experience/knowledge of computers would also be an important requirement.
- 4.3 If recruited directly to the role, the same skill set would be required.
- 4.4 The type of knowledge and skills required for this role include:
- Experience of running a busy office with an ability to run it efficiently in an emergency situation
 - Experience in responding to persistent telephone calls
 - Experience in completing a range of administration duties including printing materials, updating computer systems, filing information
 - Knowledge and understanding of the difference between civil and police law
 - Knowledge and understanding of police procedures
 - Skills in customer service that will include dealing with demanding members of the public

The skills which have to be commonly applied in the role are:

- Planning and organising, ability to multi-task and to work under pressure
- Communication skills including effective questioning techniques and listening skills to act on information received and accurately informing Police Officers assigned to investigate incidents of all relevant facts.
- Computer skills that involve the use of multiple computer systems such as Command + Control and Niche
- Remaining calm and resilient in escalating incidents, providing a professional yet assertive approach to the diversity of customers that are in contact with the enquiry office
- Working on own initiative in a busy environment
- Knowledge of health and safety regulations, data protection legislation, police procedures, traffic legislation and all relevant laws and procedures

5. Contacts and Communication

5.1 *Internal*

The Station Enquiry Assistants liaise with a wide variety of departments and most levels within the PSNI. Examples include: switchboard; finance; operational planning; crime; CID; OCMT; Custody; Domestic Violence Officers; Neighbourhood Police; Police Officers and Police Staff; Inspectors, CCTV, Central Vehicle Index, Court Liaison Officer, Premises Officer, Heads of HR, Chief Inspectors, Belfast Regional Control, fixed penalty processing centre, motorway desk, other enquiry offices and photography branch. In general the purpose of this communication is to give and receive information. For example, an SEA will contact CSI with reference to an incident, the SEA will provide as much information as possible and they will confirm if they attend the call or not. Communication via radio requires a different type of skill where the SEA communicates via codes to transfer information. The accuracy of the information flow is crucial to ensure incidents and corresponding issues are dealt with appropriately.

5.2 *External – Other Government Organisations*

The SEA communicates with a wide range of agencies to pass on and receive information. These agencies include: local council offices; housing executive; dog warden; army barracks; other police forces; immigration services; environmental offices; coroner's office; DHSS; Customs & Excise, GP's, Prison Service, Water Service, Social Workers, Public Prosecution Service, Local Hospitals, Care homes, Northern Ireland Electricity and Local Councils. For example, an SEA will contact the housing executive to gather information on householders (to pass onto Officers) and provide information on emergency call outs. Another example includes communicating with hospitals and care homes with relation to missing persons, taking details and asking relevant questions to gather and illicit the right information.

5.3 *External – Other non-Government Organisations*

Contact with other non-government organisations takes the same form as all other communications i.e. to pass on and receive information. The SEA will be in contact with local businesses and retail outlets, solicitors, Translink, hotels and hostels, taxi companies, funeral homes, park rangers, vets, security staff, Securicor, locksmiths, mountain rescue, doctors surgeries and recovery agents. For example the SEA will be in contact with local hotels and hostels to arrange accommodation for foreign nationals, homeless persons or following a domestic whereby a person has been removed from their home. Another example is whereby the SEA would be in contact with Translink if there is a report of any damage to buses and or trains to gather full details to be inputted on the Command & Control system.

A significant amount of an SEA's time is spent communicating with a wide variety of individuals who phone or visit the enquiry office. They provide information and advice as well as question individuals to gather sufficient information. They will

communicate with solicitors, foreign nationals, general public, vulnerable adults and children and those who have committed offences/crimes.

6. Problem Solving

- 6.1 The SEAs have to deal with a wide variety of problems, many of which there are limited guidelines / precedents set in which to aid the problem solving process. Typical problems may relate to the dealing with all types of members of the public on a wide variety of matters. For example SEAs will receive calls/visits from drunken individuals wishing to report incidents, the SEA has to explain what can and can't be done within these circumstances. Such explanations tend to be poorly received or ill-remembered which results in numerous calls/visits whereby the SEA has to explain the same thing repeatedly.
- 6.2 SEAs tend to get asked a wide variety of police and legislative related questions. The SEA will use their knowledge to explain the difference between police and civil law where for example a caller wishes to report something that does not require police attention/action. However where detailed technical questions are asked the SEA will seek advice from others e.g. Duty Sergeant.
- 6.3 A common problem faced by SEAs is the volume of work in that many are responsible for manning a number of phones, a police radio and the enquiry office. During 'peak times' the SEA must be able to prioritise work and multi-task whilst maintaining a professional image to the public.
- 6.4 An additional area that causes a lot of problems for the SEAs is the introduction of the NICHE system. Inputting of driving documents takes up to 20 minutes a time (traditionally 5 minutes using the paper form). This is further compounded when support is provided by untrained SDOs/Police Officers. This is a challenge when an SEA has the added pressure of a number of driving documents to input (where the individuals are waiting) as well as the other duties within the office demanding the same attention.

7. Decision Making

7.1 *Own Decisions*

SEAs have a lot of autonomy within the enquiry office and tend to respond to the variety of situations they are faced with on their own. They are the first point of contact within the police station and will make decisions in relation to grading of calls (do they require police action and the priority of the call), decisions on how to prioritise information received in the enquiry office, deciding if matters are civil or crime related and advising the public, whether an individual needs cautioned or not, if someone is fit for signing bail and deciding which information is included when completing the Occurrence Management Forms (where police investigation is not required) and Form 57's. Although these decisions can be perceived as relating to typically day to day matters, the impact of incorrect call grading or providing inaccurate advice in relation to crime could for the organisation be far reaching.

7.2 *Advising Others*

A key element of the role is to provide advice and guidance to members of the public. The advice and guidance offered by the SEAs is adhered to by the public as they have the authority in this area. Advice is in relation to parking tickets, suspicious vehicles, local whereabouts, civil disputes, tenant enquiries, reported crime, access NI/DAT1 forms etc. The SEAs also provide advice to Police Officers with relation to the use of the NICHE system for inputting exhibits and inputting driving documents and general advice on procedures reference fixed penalty notices, money warrants etc.

The SEAs will provide information and advise, foreign nationals, general public, vulnerable adults and children and those who have committed offences/crimes to provide on a range of technical/legal issues. For example, they will advise the member of the public if an issue is a police or civil issue.

8. **Autonomy**

8.1 Most of the work completed by SEAs i.e. provision of advice is guided by numerous procedures, policies and legislation. It is the SEAs responsibility to ensure they are up-to-date on the changes in relation to these via policenet or email updates sent to staff. There are no SEA manuals as such (apart from the NICHE manual) however the SEA can seek advice from Sergeants, SDO's, Call Handling or other SEAs.

8.2 Line management supervision is not always available to SEA, where it is available the level of support varies. Objectives and results are rarely reviewed or explicitly defined by line management. However where an SEA does not have a defined manager/one they see during their shift problems can be escalated to the duty/section Sergeant.

9. **Management of Resources**

9.1 *Financial Resources*

Presently, the role holder has no responsibility for financial resources other than day-to-day responsibility for receiving money into the police station such as money warrants.

9.2 *Leadership and Teamworking*

SEAs have no line management responsibility. They do however have to maintain good working relationships with all of those on their shifts including SDOs, Call Handling, Response Teams, Duty Sergeants, Inspectors and Support Staff to ensure the smooth flow of accurate and up-to-date information. The SEAs will guide and assist Probationers with enquiry office related work e.g. Niche and Command + Control.

10. Impact

10.1 Whilst the SEA deals with day-to-day issues from the public the impact of their role is evident. An effective and sound service provided to the public impacts on public perception of the organisation. In addition the assistance provided to Police Officers in terms of inputting information on NICHE allows the officers to be free from some administrative duties and have more presence on the streets. It was noted by one SEA that less and less people are now asking for Police Officers in the Enquiry Office which is an indication of the changing society.

The Enquiry Office has been described as the 'hub' of the police station whereby Police Officers and staff will meet, the efficient running of the office supports the work of all of these roles.

Factor	Sub-Factor	Question	Response	
I - KNOWLEDGE and SKILLS	Minimum Qualifications	1	F	
		2	F	
	Minimum Experience	3	F	
		4	E	
		5	E	
II - CONTACTS and COMMS	Level of Applied Skills	6	E	
		7	E	
	Internal contacts	8	E	
		9	F	
		External contacts I	10	D
			11	E
			12	F
			13	F
	External contacts II	14	D	
		15	E	
		16	F	
		17	B	
	III - PROBLEM SOLVING	Fact Finding and Analysis	18	A
			19	D
20			D	
21			D	
22			D	
Originality and Creativity		23	B	
		24	A	
		25	D	
		26	D	
		27	D	
IV - DECISION MAKING	Decisions Taken	28	D	
		29	C	
		30	A	
		31	D	
	Informing and Advising	32	D	
		33	D	
		34	D	
		35	C	
Types of Decisions	36	B		
	37	B		
V - AUTONOMY	Autonomy	37	B	
VI - MANAGING RESOURCES	Financial Resources	38	E	
	Leadership and Teamworking	39	A	
		40	C	

Factor	Sub-Factor	Question	Response
VII - IMPACT		41	D
		42	D
	Nature of Role	43	F
	Potential Impact	44	B

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