



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2009-02493

Keyword: Organisational Information/Governance

Subject: CHILDCARE VOUCHERS

Request and Answer:

I have decided to:

- disclose records in answer to questions 1 to 6, 8,10, 12 and 13 in full, and
- fully exempt record in answer to questions 7, 9, and 14 pursuant to the provisions of sections 43(2) and 21 of the Act;

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.

Question 1

Do you currently offer childcare vouchers to your staff?

Answer

Yes

Question 2

Which childcare voucher provider do you use?

Answer

Employers for Childcare

Question 3

When did your childcare voucher scheme start?

Answer

December 2007

Question 4

When was your contract with your voucher provider last renewed?

Answer

May 24, 2009

Question 5

Are you tied in to your existing provider? If so, when would you be free to move to a different provider?

Answer

We are tied into the existing provider until May 23, 2010

Question 6

When do you expect to review your scheme?

Answer

March 2010

Question 7

What administration fee are you paying your current provider, as a percentage of the voucher face value?

Answer

Your request for information in relation to this question has now been considered and the decision has been taken not to supply the information you have requested.

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

Section 43(2) of the Act is a prejudiced based exemption and this means it is the Public Authority's responsibility to evidence the harm. It is also a qualified exemption and therefore a Public Interest Test must be carried out.

HARM TEST

This question asks for information that may compromise a commercial interest. To release this detail would be likely to reveal a company's pricing structure for supplying these vouchers. This information is calculated as part of the tendering process, therefore disclosing this detail would provide an unfair advantage to one company if they wish to undercut another during any forthcoming tendering process.

PUBLIC INTEREST TEST**Factors Favouring Disclosure**Accountability

To ensure that the Service remains accountable for its actions in this area and that tendering processes are properly and honestly conducted.

Use Of Public Funds

The public have the right to know that public funds are being spent appropriately and that the PSNI is receiving value for money.

Factors Favouring RetentionInterests Of Third Parties

This consideration must be made in this case because the information of, and relating to other parties is being requested. Commercial sensitivity is of great importance at all times to the Police Service. Private companies invest a great deal of time, effort and money into the field of research and development just to stay one step ahead of their potential competitors. Therefore the release of such information could end any such advantage gained, and compromise a company's participation in future procurement competitions

Also the PSNI must ensure that public funds are used correctly, and value for money is achieved at all times. To compromise the position of Companies who provide professional services to us would be counter-productive in achieving this aim in two respects – firstly the said company may no longer feel that their information will be held in confidence by PSNI, and secondly other companies who ironically may initially benefit from such a release, might subsequently see it as a potentially negative factor when considering future business with PSNI.

Balance Test

Accountability of the Police Service, and the correct use of public funds are always of great importance and both are integral to the decision making process in this case. However the over-riding factor here must be the Service's ability to hold all future procurement competitions, in the knowledge that all interested Companies can compete on a "level playing field" and in an unfettered manner, knowing that all information supplied to us will be received and held in confidence

thereafter. It is for this very important reason alone that the exemption will be engaged.

Question 8

How many active members are in your childcare voucher scheme?

Answer

540

Question 9

Does your voucher provider offer any additional services or benefits? If so, please provide details of the services offered and the number of your employees who actively use them.

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 request may be located at <http://www.employersforchildcare.org/parents/>

Question 10

Do you operate your own payroll services or use an external payroll provider? If you use an external payroll provider, is your childcare voucher scheme offered as part of their service or are you free to select your own provider?

Answer

The PSNI operates its own internal payroll services.

Question 11

How would you grade the customer service provided by your voucher provider: Excellent, Good, Average or Poor?

Answer

This is not a valid question under Section 8(1) (c) of the Act as it does not ask for recorded information.

Question 12

Please provide contact details for the person who manages the day-to-day administration of your scheme.

Answer

Anna Waterworth, Equality Diversity Unit, Lisnasharragh PSNI, 42 Montgomery Rd, Belfast, Co Down, BT06 9LD.
Telephone: 028 9092 2573

Question 13

Please provide contact details for the person who has overall responsibility for employee benefits.

Answer

Maura Muldoon, Equality Diversity Unit, Lisnasharragh PSNI, 42 Montgomery Rd, Belfast, Co Down, BT06 9LD.
Telephone: 028 90 922589. (Childcare Voucher Scheme Only)

Question 14

How many employees are on your payroll?

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 our Publication Scheme please visit our website at:

http://www.psni.police.uk/index/updates/updates_statistics/updates_strength_of_police_service_statistics.htm

Question 15

If you don't yet offer childcare vouchers to your staff, have you got any plans to introduce a scheme? If so, please indicate when you intend to start looking for suppliers.

Answer

This is not a valid question under Section 8(1) (c) of the Act as it does not ask for recorded information.

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.