



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2010-01703

Keyword: Complaints/Discipline

Subject: Police Officers - Corruption Charges

Request and Answer:

I refer to your request for information which was received by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) on 17th June 2010 concerning police officers who have been charged with a form of corruption or dishonesty over the past ten years, and if our Service has a special anti-corruption unit and confidential hotline.

The decision has been taken not to supply the information you have requested.

Section 17 (5) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Police Service of Northern Ireland, when refusing to provide such information (because the cost of compliance exceeds the appropriate limit) to provide you the applicant with a notice which states that fact.

Professional Standards Department is responsible for internal discipline and therefore holds data in relation to police officers (from cases reported to the Department) who are alleged to have committed criminal offences. However, specific details on whether as a result of a criminal investigation, police officers were charged with an offence and indeed dates, ranks and nature of these charges, are not recorded centrally, or as a matter of routine within the Department. Whilst some information may be available, this would have to be extracted manually from within the covers of a minimum of 2500 investigation files for the time period requested.

It is estimated that it would take almost 170 hours to retrieve and extract the information from these files and therefore massively exceed the "appropriate costs limit" under Section 12 (1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, which is currently set by the Secretary of State at £450, at the rate of £25 per hour.

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this letter should be considered as a Refusal Notice, and the case has therefore been closed.

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.

In compliance with Section 16 of the Act, Duty to Assist, I can advise you that as a method of refinement it may be possible to supply the following information relative to your request.

There are no such criminal offences for corruption or dishonesty. Therefore the PSNI interprets offences of corruption or dishonesty to be offences under the Theft Acts, the Fraud Act, Breach of the Data Protection Act, and Misconduct in a Public Office.

PSNI Professional Standards Department can supply details of police officers convicted under the Theft Acts, the Fraud Act, Breach of the Data Protection Act and Misconduct in a Public Office, a range of ranks involved, and a range of disciplinary action taken against these officers.

The figures would not include student officers who come under the remit of the Police College until attested as Constables. This information would cover the period 1.4.00 to 31.3.10.

Although excess cost removes the PSNI's obligations under the Freedom of Information Act, in order to assist I have supplied some information relative to your request. I trust this is helpful, but it does not affect our legal right to rely on the fees regulations for the remainder of your request.

Does your force have a special anti-corruption unit?

Yes, PSNI Professional Standards Department have an anti-corruption unit. More information regarding the role of the department including this unit can be found at http://www.psni.police.uk/policy_directive_1107.pdf

Does your force have a confidential hotline available for officers wanting to report corruption?

Yes, the PSNI have a confidential hotline available to report corruption. As above, further information can be accessed by viewing the PSNI Professional Standards Policy. http://www.psni.police.uk/policy_directive_1107.pdf

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.psni.police.uk

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