



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2010-00979

Keyword: Crime

Subject: Child Sex Abuse Cases

Request and Answer:

Question 1

How many child sex abuse cases are police currently investigating?

Question 2

Please list the range of offences - and how many cases against each. For example indecent assault (X), sexual assault (X), Rape (X)

Question 3

Please give the youngest age in each category.

Answer

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.

The information required to provide an accurate response to your request is not held in an easily retrievable format. The PSNI's central Rape Crime Unit holds information in relation to child sex abuse cases where the child knows the rapist. Furthermore, each of the PSNI's eight District Command Units (DCU) has its own Public Protection Unit (PPU) who investigate other aspects of child sex abuse. DCUs were also canvassed for cost estimates for retrieving any information held in relation to your request. Responses from the districts indicated that the retrieval of this data would take well in excess of the time permitted to locate and provide the information as set down in FOI legislation.

I would like to draw your attention to the fact that there is no standardised way to collate the requested information within different Districts which is why some DCU's may be able to retrieve the information and provide a response within the time permitted under FOI legislation and other Districts would have to carry out prolonged searches.

One district has advised that they would need to check 141 investigation files to obtain the requested data. Allowing 10 mins to check each file would equate to 23 hours to retrieve the information for this district alone.

Therefore it is estimated that the cost of complying with your request for information would 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 (18 hours).

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

The Police Service of Northern Ireland have also considered whether we can be of any assistance in term of helping you refine your request to bring it under the cost limit, however, the nature and structure of the information unfortunately makes this impossible.

In order to provide you with some assistance, I can advise that the PSNI’s Rape Crime Unit are currently investigating 7 child sex abuse cases, 14 offences of rape(oral, vaginal) sexual assault (penetrative and non penetrative) and 19 offences of rape (oral, anal, vaginal) and sexual assault (penetrative and non penetrative). Of these cases, the youngest child was 12 years old.

If you have any queries regarding your request or this 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 letter.

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.