



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F 2010 00458

Keyword: Crime

Subject: FORENSIC EXAMINATION OF ELECTRONICS

Request and Answer:

In relation to questions 3, 4 and 10, 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.

No database exists to record details of the number of forensic examinations meeting certain criteria, therefore an officer would be required to manually search all files in order to gather this information. It has been estimated that it would take approximately 24 hours for officers to complete this task.

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this letter should be considered as a Section 17(1) Refusal Notice, and the request 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.

Although excess cost removes the service’s obligations under the Freedom of Information Act, as a gesture of goodwill, I have supplied information, relative to your request, retrieved or available before it was realised that the fees limit would be exceeded. I trust this will be helpful, but it does not affect our legal right to rely on the fees regulations for the remainder of your request.

Question 1

Does your Force have a requirement for the forensic examination of computers, digital media and/or mobile telephones seized during the course of criminal or other investigations?

Answer 1

Yes, the PSNI does have a requirement for this.

Question 2

Does your Force have a unit or units whose specific role is to conduct such forensic examinations?

Answer 2

Yes, such a unit exists within the PSNI.

Question 5

Does any unit, tasked with the forensic examination of computers, retain a hash library of indecent photographs of a child (C4P or similar) and if so.

Answer 5

Yes, a hash library is maintained.

Question 6

How many hash values does it contain in total and individually for each of the 5 levels currently in use for sentencing purposes.

Answer 6

Total = 13 million

Cat 1 = Approx 360,000

Cat 2 = Approx 26,000

Cat 3 = Approx 8,000

Cat 4 = Approx 9,000

Cat 5 = Approx 800

Question 7

If your Force does not have such a specialist unit or if they cannot handle all requirements in house then please provide the following information.

Question 8

Who conducts forensic examinations of computers, digital media and/or mobile telephones on behalf of the your Force.

Answer 7 and 8

PSNI conduct examinations of computers, digital media and mobile phones. Forensic Science Northern Ireland conduct approximately 30% of the mobile phone examinations related to volume crime.

Question 9

How is this facilitated?

Answer 9

This is facilitated by local agreement.

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

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