



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



**Request Number:** F-2010-03559

**Keyword:** Crime

**Subject:** Sexual Offences Prevention Orders (SOPO)

### Request and Answer:

This is to inform you that the Police Service of Northern Ireland has now completed its search for the information you requested and the answers to your questions are as follows:

#### Question 1

How many Sexual Offences Prevention Orders (SOPO) have been granted by the courts service for those persons convicted of a schedule 3 or schedule 5 offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 in your police force area in the last 3 years.

#### Question 2

How many Sexual Offences Prevention Orders (SOPO) have been applied for specifically by your police force, and granted, in respect of a person who has previously been dealt with for such an offence in the last 3 years.

#### Question 3

How many Sexual Offences Prevention Orders (SOPO) have been breached in your police force area in the last 3 years. Of those who have breached a Sexual Offences Prevention Order, please tell me the category of that breach and provide a breakdown of what proportion were returned to custody.

#### Question 4

How many full-time equivalent staff within your police force area worked within sexual offences teams on 1 December.

#### Question 5

What is the budget for the current financial year that your police force area provides to sexual offences teams, and for tackling crime around sexual offences, in your police force area.

#### Question 6

Any other information that would allow me to understand better how sexual offenders in your police force area are monitored, sexual offences teams are budgeted and about how future budget cuts may affect staff levels.

**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.

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).

The information requested in question 5 is not held centrally. Therefore, it was necessary to canvass all districts and departments within PSNI. To provide the information requested, would require examination of each team members' salary, overtime, expense payments, vehicle costs etc and each cost would have to be scrutinized to identify which costs were incurred whilst working with sexual offence crimes, as opposed to other work within the district. One district alone has estimated that this retrieval process would take approximately 16 hours. This estimate, in addition to the other districts retrieval, would be in excess of 35 hours. This would greatly exceed the 18 hour limit set by the Secretary of State and would therefore be over cost to provide.

The PSNI has also considered if it can assist you to help you refine your request to bring it under the cost limit, however the nature and structure of the information makes this impossible.

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.

Although excess cost removes the PSNI's obligations under the Freedom of Information Act, I have provided below the information which was retrieved before it was realised that the fees limit would be exceeded. 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.

**Question 1**

How many Sexual Offences Prevention Orders (SOPO) have been granted by the courts service for those persons convicted of a schedule 3 or schedule 5 offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 in your police force area in the last 3 years.

**Answer**

Your request for information has now been considered and I am not obliged to supply the information you have requested.

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 the applicant with a notice which:

- (a) states the fact,
- (b) specifies the exemption in question and
- (c) states (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies.

The following exemption has been applied:

**Section 21 - Information Reasonably Accessible by Other Means**

The information you have requested can be accessed via the website link provided below:  
<http://www.publicprotectionni.com/>

**Question 2**

How many Sexual Offences Prevention Orders (SOPO) have been applied for specifically by your police force, and granted, in respect of a person who has previously been dealt with for such an

offence in the last 3 years.

**Answer**

From 2008 – 2010 there have been 72 SOPO's granted in relation to persons previously dealt with for a similar offence. No information is held in relation to the number applied for.

**Question 3**

How many Sexual Offences Prevention Orders (SOPO) have been breached in your police force area in the last 3 years. Of those who have breached a Sexual Offences Prevention Order, please tell me the category of that breach and provide a breakdown of what proportion were returned to custody.

**Answer**

Of the 72 SOPO's issued between 2008 – 2010, 11 have been breached, the categories are as follows:

10 x Category 2 breached, 6 have been convicted, 2 are in prison and 2 have been reported.

1 x Category 3 breached, and is in prison.

**Question 4**

How many full-time equivalent staff within your police force area worked within sexual offences teams on 1 December.

**Answer**

There are currently 55 staff, however ALL police officers are empowered to investigate any offence.

**Question 6**

Any other information that would allow me to understand better how sexual offenders in your police force area are monitored, sexual offences teams are budgeted and about how future budget cuts may affect staff levels.

**Answer**

Further information can be accessed via the website link provided below which may assist you.

ACPO 2010 Guidance on Protecting the Public <http://www.npia.police.uk/en/6533.htm>

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](mailto: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](http://www.psni.police.uk)

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