



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2010-01941
Keyword: Finance
Subject: Cost of Forensic Medical Examiners

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.

Question 1

Could you let me know how much the force spent on police surgeons/forensic medical examiners for each of the last three financial years, please?

Answer

Please see the table below which details Forensic Medical Examiner (FMO) fees for the last three financial years.

**FMO Fees 2007/08 to
2009/10**

Financial Year	Resource Costs £k
2007/08	3,447
2008/09	3,401
2009/10	3,630

Question 2

If possible, could you also tell me how many individuals were paid in each year, broken down into the following bandings?

£50,000 or less
Between £51,000 - £99,000;
£100,000 to £149,000;
£150,000 to 199,000;
£200,000 to 249,000
and £250,000 plus?

Answer

Please see the table below which details the number of individuals paid in each pay band.

Question 3

What was the amount paid to the highest-earning doctor in each of the last three years?

Answer

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.

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

The information you have requested contains Personal Data which relate to an individual who may be identified from this data. The exact amount paid to the highest earning Forensic Medical Officer has therefore been exempted pursuant to the provisions of Sections 40 (2) (a) (b) of the Freedom of Information Act.

This is an absolute exemption, which means there is no requirement on the police to consider whether there is a public interest in disclosure. This is so because personal data is governed by other law (The Data Protection Act 1998). There are a number of elements to the Section 40 exemption and the second element is relevant in this instance. It is engaged if the request is for the personal data of someone other than the applicant.

Personal Data is regulated under the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998 and when information contains personal data about a third party it can only be refused if disclosure would breach any of the data protection principles.

I examined whether the information you requested is personal data as defined within the provisions of the Data Protection Act and I particularly focused on the following: -

- Does this data relate, focus and be about a living individual?
- Could someone be identified from that data?
- Does the data impact on their privacy either in their work or family life?
- Is the data being processed by the PSNI to learn, record or decide something about an individual?
- As an incidental consequence could you learn something about an identifiable individual?

In this instance I am satisfied the information **is personal data** as it is about a living individual and it is about his / her specific remuneration for services provided by a Forensic Medical Officer. If this data were to be released as a public disclosure I have no doubt it would impact on the privacy of the individual concerned in their professional life.

The identity of the individual may be known to others or to you and therefore by disclosing information about their salary and how the PSNI specifically paid that person will allow you to learn something about him /her. I will not comment further on how the impact of any release would have on the individual other than it would be harmful and in all likelihood damaging.

The PSNI process personal data for three purposes, which we notify to the Information Commissioner. One of these is “**Staff Administration**” and this relates to personal data processed mainly for the work management of staff, which includes salary matters.

As already highlighted, any disclosure under FOIA is a **public disclosure** and release of the personal data of an individual relating to their pay, would breach principles 1 & 2 of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Principle (1) - that personal data is processed lawfully and fairly. Personal data of this nature is initially imparted and recorded for the purposes of staff administration by the PSNI. It will be treated in a highly confidential manner by dedicated personnel staff. No other member of PSNI staff will have access to this data and any public disclosure will be unlawful if there is a breach of that law of confidentiality.

Police Forensic medical Officers must provide personal data to the organisation regarding the hours and services they provide, and consequently they will receive the relevant remuneration applicable and will have the expectation that it will be treated fairly. Any disclosure of this type of data into the public domain that relates to a Forensic Medical Officer will be unfair to any individual concerned.

Principle (2), that personal data is processed for a specific purpose and not further processed in any manner incompatible with that purpose. As previously mentioned, personal data in this instance was gathered and is processed for a specific staff administration purpose. Once personal data has been publicly disclosed, it will in most cases be used for a purpose other than it was initially obtained.

Police Forensic Medical Officers do not expect their personal data to be used for another purpose. If released into the public domain it will be used for a totally incompatible purpose, which could lead to intrusive attention from others.

All requests made under FOIA are applicant blind. A request must be treated as such and a public authority will always view any disclosure as into the public domain and not just to an individual.

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 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.

Year	Value £k	Number of Individuals
2009/10	>50	57
2009/10	51 -99	12
2009/10	100-149	7
2009/10	150-199	0
2009/10	200-249	1
2009/10	250+	0
	Total	77
2008/09	>50	61
2008/09	51 -99	15
2008/09	100-149	5
2008/09	150-199	1
2008/09	200-249	1
2008/09	250+	0
	Total	115
2007/2008	>50	55
2007/2008	51 -99	14
2007/2008	100-149	7
2007/2008	150-199	1
2007/2008	200-249	0
2007/2008	250+	0
	Total	77