



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2010-00209
Keyword: Finance
Subject: Rent or Housing Allowance

Request and Answer:

I am writing to confirm that the Police Service of Northern Ireland has now completed its search for the information and the answers to your questions are as follows:

Question 1

My understanding is that officers in post prior to 1st September 1994 are entitled to an allowance previously known as Rent or Housing Allowance. I understand this allowance may now be called a "Replacement Allowance" or something similar.

I require the following details in respect of the financial years 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10 (01/04/09 to 31/12/09):

The total amount paid by the police authority during the individual periods?

Answer

2007/2008 = £15,867,954.14

2008/2009 = £14,280,123.29

April 09 - December 09 = £9,372,934.22

Question 2

The number of officers receiving the allowance during the individual periods?

Answer

At March 31, 2008: 3639 were paid allowances

At March 31, 2009: 3808 were paid allowances

At December 31, 2009: 3633 were paid allowances

Question 3

The highest single claim during the individual periods, this may be given as a calendar month figure or the period as a whole?

Answer

The same figure for all 3 periods = £406.16 per month

Question 4

In addition, would you advise me the date that the oldest claim commenced and how much has been paid to that officer?

Answer

It is estimated that the cost of complying with question 4 in 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.

This information is not held on any Finance System and therefore, to retrieve this information would require trawling through each individual members personnel file to locate the start date of this payment. This would require staff at each of the eight Districts to search through over 9000 files to try and find the original housing/rent papers that in some cases originate from the early eighties. This would be an extremely labour intensive and time consuming task.

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this letter should be considered as a Refusal Notice with regard to question 4.

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

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.