



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



**Request Number:** F 2010 03591

**Keyword:** Finance

**Subject:** Spending on Hotels

### Request and Answer:

#### Request

Under the Freedom of Information Act, I would like to request details of spending on hotels for witnesses and police officers involved in court cases or any other formal hearings (this could be an internal disciplinary hearing for example).

- 1) For both 2010 and 2009, please state the total amount spent on hotel rooms for witnesses and police officers involved in court cases.  
If it makes it easier, take the stats from the current financial year (10 – 11) and the last financial year (09-10).
- 2) Please provide a full list of hotels that have been used for both 2009 and 2010 and state how many times each one has been used. I am interested in the total number of rooms booked. For example, if the Travelodge in 'Newtown' has been booked 85 times for 40 different witnesses on 20 different nights, the answer to this question is 85.  
Total usage is what I am after.
- 3) What is the largest expenses spend on any one individual for both 2009 and 2010? Within this I am interested in travel expenses, hotels, meals and any other costs paid. Please say which hotel was used, how many nights it was booked for, how much the travel came to and how much was spent on food. Please also state the type of hearing the witness was attending (Magistrates, Crown Court trial etc). Finally please say whether the individual was a police officer, expert witness, 'civilian' or categorised in any other way.
- 4) Please summarise briefly what the force policy is on hotel rooms for witnesses is (or attach document if one exists). This may be, for example, the witness must live more than 30 miles away from court before they are eligible for accommodation etc).
- 5) Please state who pays the bill – is it the Crown Prosecution Service or the police force or another body (central government)?

## **Answer**

Police do not hold information regarding normal expenses incurred by witnesses.

### **Section 16 – Duty to provide advice and assistance**

It is the responsibility of the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) to make arrangements for witnesses to attend court and as such should be in a better position to assist with the questions in this area.

You can contact the PPS using the below link

<http://www.ppsni.gov.uk/default.aspx?CATID=15>

In relation to police Section 17(5) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), 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. Unfortunately, this information for Police is not collated in an easily retrievable format. Expenses for court appearances by police officers would be submitted along with any other expenses claims. To retrieve the requested information would require a manual trawl of thousands of claim forms submitted by officers to determine which claims were for hotels in relation to court cases or any other formal hearings. The information requested would have to be extracted, form by form, and subsequently collated into a manner which may or may not answer your questions. There would also be claims where further research would have to be carried out to answer your questions, thus increasing the cost yet again. To carry out this exercise for all police officers over a two year period would greatly exceed the 18 hour (£450) limit.

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.

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. Unfortunately the nature and structure of the requested information in relation to the Police makes it extremely difficult for the PSNI to advise you how to refine your request to a point below the £450 cost limit.

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.psnipolice.uk](http://www.psnipolice.uk)

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