



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



**Request Number:** F-2010-00144

**Keyword:** Human Resources

**Subject:** Officers and Staff Suffering Hearing Loss in the Police Service

### 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

I am trying to find out more about officers and staff suffering from hearing problems in the police service. Please could you respond to the following request, made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Just to clarify, the time frame for the following information is the past five years - from January 2005  
How many officers/staff at your force have reported hearing damage or hearing loss following a job related incident or injury?

#### Question 2

Of these: please give details of any, including

- A) Rank/Role (where this will not lead to individual being identified)
- B) Age
- C) Details of the incident
- D) Details of the hearing damage

#### Answer

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.

Claims are registered on the PSNI database as a claim from an ex-member or serving officer. In order to provide rank/role, age and details of incident/hearing damage information, each claim would need to be manually checked. As this would entail checking 5,342 claims and estimating 5mins per file, this would therefore take in excess of 400 hours work. This would be a labour intensive and time consuming task which exceeds the appropriate limit set by the Secretary of State at £450 (18 hours).

In relation to the details of the incident, the vast majority of claims do not relate to one individual incident. Claimants are alleging hearing loss due to long term inadequate hearing protection at weapon training, helicopter use and radio use.

In relation to the details of hearing damage, each claimant is medically examined by their own doctor and by a doctor appointed by PSNI. These medical reports would be held on file and contain details of the level of hearing loss suffered by each claimant. With such a high number of claimants not everyone has been medically examined as yet. Hearing loss is usually graded mild, moderate or severe but to extract this information would entail as above a manual check of all files. This would be unmanageable.

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'. I have considered whether I can be of any assistance in terms of helping you refine your request to bring it under the cost limit. Within cost we could provide the number of staff/officers who have reported hearing loss or damage for claim purposes. However, these figures would be held by financial year (1<sup>st</sup> April – 31<sup>st</sup> March).

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.

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](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.