



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2010-02150

Keyword: Operational Policing

Subject: Gun Licences

Request and Answer:

I am writing to confirm that the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) has now completed its search for the information you requested.

Question 1

Full details of gun licences issued in the force area in each of the last five years. I would like the response to include a breakdown of licenses according to the age of holders, particularly those aged under 18 years.

Question 2

Full details of gun licences revoked in the force area in each of the last five years. I would like the response to include a breakdown of decisions according to the reason for revocation and the age of holders, particularly those aged under 18 years.

Question 3

Full details of gun licences renewed in the force area in each of the last five years. I would like the response to include a breakdown of decisions according to the format through which the licence was renewed – i.e. following a personal visit, assessment, over the telephone, etc.

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.

Information is not held in an easily retrievable format. It would involve interrogating our Firearms Licensing database to locate records for each individual year and then manually researching every record or physical file to ascertain age groups, age at the time of revocation, the reasons for which the firearm certificate was revoked and the process used in each individual case. There are 65,442 records in relation to question 3 alone and estimating approximately 5 minutes per record to retrieve

the information requested would total 5,453 hours to research, plus a substantial number of hours to collate and present. This hugely exceeds the appropriate 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.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland have also considered whether we can be of any assistance in terms of helping you refine your request to bring it under the cost limit, however apart from what has already been provided below, the structure and nature of this information unfortunately makes this impossible .

Although excess cost removes the service's obligations under the Freedom of Information Act, as a gesture of goodwill, I have supplied information, relative to your request, retrieved in light of refinement. I trust this will be helpful, but it does not affect our legal right to rely on the fees regulations for the remainder of your request.

Question 1

YEAR	FIREARM CERTIFICATES ISSUED	PERSONS AGED UNDER 18 YEARS
2005	1053	21
2006	3217	43
2007	3715	27
2008	3505	27
2009	2139	31

Question 2

YEAR	FIREARM CERTIFICATES REVOKED
2005	129
2006	80
2007	92
2008	113
2009	109

Question 3

YEAR	FIREARM CERTIFICATES – FURTHER GRANTS
2005	10753
2006	24130
2007	14116
2008	10676
2009	5767

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.

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.psnj.police.uk

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