



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2010-02949

Keyword: Operational Policing

Subject: Underage Drinking

Request and Answer:

Your request for information has now been considered and the decision has been taken not to supply the information you have requested.

Question 1

Please provide details of all test purchases made for alcohol in Northern Ireland by PSNI this year.

Question 2

Please state how many premises (1) passed and (2) failed. (Please include both on and off trade).

Question 3

Please identify which premises failed, including their location.

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/s, as well as the factors the Department considered when deciding where the public interest lies, are listed below:

Section 22 (1) Information Intended for Future Publication

This is a qualified exemption which means that the public authority must consider the balance of the public interest in releasing the information against the public interest in withholding it.

Public Interest Test

For Release

Release of the requested information would lead to better understanding of the Test Purchase of Alcohol Scheme and aid accountability in ensuring the pilot operations have been conducted satisfactorily.

For Retention

The PSNI have undertaken to conduct a full public Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) on the Test Purchase of Alcohol Scheme in conjunction with the annual review of the policy. Therefore, the information requested is already planned for release at the end of 2011.

Only approved PSNI pilot operations have been undertaken to date. The purpose of these operations is to assess the operational effectiveness of the draft policy in relation to test purchasing of alcohol. The Criminal Justice Department have advised that it is imperative that they follow the original publication schedule in relation to the results of these operational pilots. All information gathered within the exercises is obtained from child volunteers acting on behalf of the PSNI. To ensure their anonymity and safety, the PSNI wish to ensure that it makes its own administrative arrangements before this information is released to the public.

Premature release of this information could also undermine the effectiveness of the scheme. To release statistics on the pilot scheme at this stage would be likely to prejudice a wider range of test purchase of alcohol operations at a time when the official policy is about to be launched, and have a detrimental effect on the conduct of alcohol trade.

Decision

As there is already an intention to publish the information requested the decision to release the information is a question of timing. Although there are valid factors favouring release of this information, for the reasons outlined above, the public interest in the PSNI following its original publication schedule is stronger at this time.

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.