



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2011-00129

Keyword: Complaints/Discipline

Subject: Police Officer Convictions

Request and Answer:

Question 1

How many serving staff, of each rank, have been investigated and/or convicted of (a) violent offences, (b) sex offences, (c) fraud offences and (d) offences of burglary, theft or robbery (i) before and (ii) during their employment;

Question 2

How many serving police officers, of each rank, were investigated for (a) violent offences, (b) sex offences, (c) offences of fraud and (d) offences of burglary, theft or robbery before their appointment.

You clarified that your request relates to Police Officers only.

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 (18 hours).

PSNI, Professional Standards Department is responsible for internal discipline and therefore holds data in relation to serving police officers, who have been investigated and/or convicted of various offences during their employment. However to retrieve information on rank, type of alleged offence, investigation outcome and if the officer is still serving would entail the examination of over 7000 (number of officers currently serving) records. It is estimated that it would take over 600 hours to retrieve and extract the information requested in question 1.

To provide a response to question 2 would require examination of all vetting files for 7000 police officers. Taking approximately 5 minutes to check each record, would take a total of 583 hours. Unfortunately, the retrieval process would greatly exceed the “appropriate costs limit” under Section 12 (1) of the Freedom of Information 2000 and is therefore over cost.

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this letter should be considered as a Refusal Notice, and the case 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'. In compliance with Section 16 of the Act, I have considered how your request may be refined to bring it under the appropriate limit. PSNI, Professional Standards Department can supply (subject to any exemptions which may apply) the number of serving police officers convicted of violent offences, sex offences, fraud offences and offences of burglary, theft or robbery in 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010.

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 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.psni.police.uk

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