



## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



**Request Number:** F 2011 02454

**Keyword:** Crime

**Subject:** PSNI investigations re Church related abuse allegations

### Request and Answer:

#### Question 1

How many cases of church related abuse allegations are currently being investigated by the PSNI.

#### Question 2

What years do the individual cases refer to.

#### Question 3

How many of these cases have been referred to the PSNI by the catholic church.

#### Question 4

What years do these cases refer to.

#### Question 5

How many priests are currently being investigated, on foot of these abuse allegations.

#### Question 6

How many of these cases relate to sex abuse.

#### Question 7

What is the nature of the other allegations.

#### Question 8

I've been asked by the PSNI Press Office to seek the above information through an FOI. Can you give me an understanding of why it has not been possible to get this basic information through usual Press Office facilities.

#### Answer

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. If this cost applies to one or more questions, then it applies to the entire request.

This information is not held in an easily retrievable format and therefore it would be over the fees to extract. Information of this nature will be embedded into different police records, both electronic and paper based, and is not held in one central location. The research to even locate and retrieve the requested information would require a manual case by case search. This would necessitate trawling through individual investigation files. It is therefore 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 (i.e. 18 hours work).

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.

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

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. Although PSNI would hold information regarding church related abuse allegations these records as mentioned previously would be embedded in different records and held in various systems. Therefore, due to the nature and structure of the information requested this would make it extremely difficult for the PSNI to advise you how to refine your request to a point below the £450 cost 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.

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 before it was realised that the fees limit would be exceeded. 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.

[http://www.psni.police.uk/abuse\\_catholic\\_church.pdf](http://www.psni.police.uk/abuse_catholic_church.pdf)

### **Answer to question 8**

To provide a response to you in relation to the above questions would require information to be compiled by several departments across the organisation and as such is not information that is readily accessible to the PSNI's Department of Corporate Communications. The role of this Department and in particular the Press office, is to provide information, advice and guidance on ongoing incidents and investigations as well as facilitating interview requests and providing statements. Therefore the level of detail you requested in the above questions is not something the press office has the staff, resources or facilities to access and compile.

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.psni.police.uk](http://www.psni.police.uk)

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