



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2011-01261

Keyword: Crime

Subject: Crimes Which Were Screened Out

Request and Answer:

Question 1

Does the force have a policy of "screening out" crime that is deemed, following a preliminary investigation, to be very unlikely to be solved due to lack of evidence?

Question2

If so, how many crimes were "screened out" in 2010/11. What was the total number of crimes recorded in 2010/11?

Question 3

How many crimes were screened out by crime type (violent crime, sexual crime, crimes of dishonesty etc) in 2010/11? How many crimes were recorded in 2010/11 broken down by the same crime types?

Question 4

How many crimes were "screened out" in 2009/10. What was the total number of crimes recorded in 2009/10?

Question 5

How many crimes were screened out by crime type (violent crime, sexual crime, crimes of dishonesty etc) in 2009/10? How many crimes were recorded in 2009/10 broken down by the same crime types?

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.

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 (18hours).

The PSNI do not currently have a corporate policy regarding screening and any decisions regarding whether to screen crime or not are currently taken locally at District level. I contacted each of the PSNI 8 Districts in an attempt to retrieve information to respond to your request but have been advised that details of crimes which may have been screened out after primary investigations are not recorded separately and to obtain this information would require an examination of each individual

crime to ascertain if any had been dealt with in this manner. One District alone advised they record approximately 10000 crimes per year and allowing 10 minutes per crime to check how the investigation was disposed of would equate to over 1500 hours which is well in excess of the time permitted under legislation which is 18 hours.

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'. In compliance with Section 16 of the Act, I have considered how your request may be refined to bring it under the appropriate limit however the nature and structure of the information unfortunately makes this impossible.

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 PSNI's obligations under the Freedom of Information Act, I have provided below the information which was retrieved before it was realised that the fees limit would be exceeded. I trust this is helpful but it does not affect our legal right to rely on the fees regulations for the remainder of your request.

PSNI Central Statistics Unit have advised that figures in relation to Crimes recorded for 09/10 and 10/11 can be viewed at:

<http://www.psnipolice.uk/1.10.11.recorded.crime.pdf>

<http://www.psnipolice.uk/1.recorded.crime.200910.pdf>

and the closest match to crime types would be a breakdown of crime by the main offence types which can also be viewed at these links.

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.psnipolice.uk

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