



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F 2011 00534

Keyword: Crime

Subject: DNA

Request and Answer:

- 1) From January 2008 to December 2008, how many DNA samples were taken from citizens?
- 2) Of the number of DNA samples taken during January 2008 to December 2008, how many people who provided the samples were later arrested?
- 3) Of the number of DNA samples taken during January 2008 to December 2008, how many people were later charged with an offence?
- 4) From January 2008 to December 2008, how many DNA samples were destroyed?
- 5) From January 2009 to December 2009, how many DNA samples were taken from citizens?
- 6) Of the number of DNA samples taken during January 2009 to December 2009, how many people who provided the samples were later arrested?
- 7) Of the number of DNA samples taken during January 2009 to December 2009, how many people were later charged with an offence?
- 8) From January 2009 to December 2009, how many DNA samples were destroyed?
- 9) From January 2010 to December 2010, how many DNA samples were taken from citizens?
- 10) Of the number of DNA samples taken during January 2010 to December 2010, how many people who provided the samples were later arrested?
- 11) Of the number of DNA samples taken during January 2010 to December 2010, how many people were later charged with an offence?
- 12) From January 2008 to December 2008, how many DNA samples were destroyed?
- 13) How many DNA samples have been taken in the first two months of 2011?

14) Of those samples, how many people were later arrested?

15) Of those samples, how many people were later charged with an offence?

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.

In relation to question 2, 3,6,7,10 and 11 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. To locate and retrieve this requested information would require a specific script/programme to be written. Once written, the script/programme would have to search tens of thousands of custody records on the PSNI database and then separately validate the information. If this cost applies to one or more questions, then it applies to the entire request. In addition this exercise would involve creating information which we are not obliged to do under the Act.

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 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 DNA, the information regarding those arrested and charged is not readily available as it is embedded within various records and would require research and IT assistance to extract. 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.

Your request asks “..how many DNA samples were taken from citizens etc..”. PSNI do not randomly take DNA samples from citizens therefore the response is zero. PSNI do take Criminal Justice (CJ) samples from all arrestees brought to custody suites. Anyone arrested on suspicion of involvement in a crime has a DNA (CJ) sample taken provided there is not already a confirmed DNA profile on the database.

We note that questions 4 and 12 are the same.

If you have any queries regarding your request or the decision please do not hesitate to contact 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.