



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F 2011 01127

Keyword: Crime

Subject: DNA

Request and Answer:

I write to request the following information under the Freedom of Information Act.

Question 1

How many people, with an address in the BT47 and BT48 post code areas, currently have their DNA profiles held on the PSNI database?

Question 2

How many of these people have never been charged with a criminal offence?

Question 3

By age, how many of these people fall into the under 10, 10-15, 16-18 and 18+ categories?

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.

As addresses or postcodes are not contained within the Northern Ireland DNA database, it is estimated that the information you have requested is not retrievable within the cost limit and to comply 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 work).

By way of further explanation, in order to try and extract the information you have requested from the information PSNI currently hold, a computer programme would have to be designed and written which may be able to search the DNA database and compare the extracted information with any other possible information PSNI may hold in relation to incidents and offences. PSNI also have to balance resource and operational needs against current economic budget pressures. As this exercise may or may not produce any information relevant to your request it would not be practicable to conduct.

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 profiles, information relevant to your request, is not contained within the Northern Ireland DNA database and as mentioned previously could be embedded in other records which are currently not searchable for the type of information you request. 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.

If you have any queries regarding your request or this 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.