



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2011-00117

Keyword: Organisational Information/Governance

Subject: Alcohol Test Purchase Activity Statistics

Request and Answer:

I write in connection with your request for information received on 14th January 2011 outlined as follows:

Question 1

To provide us with a benchmark against which to measure our own pass/fail performance in a particular geographical area, we are currently compiling an overview of alcohol test purchase activity during the calendar year 2010 across the United Kingdom and would appreciate your assistance in providing the following statistics for that year in respect of your area.

The total number of alcohol test purchase operations undertaken in all premises in your area?

Question 2

The total number of premises which passed/failed alcohol test purchase operations in your area?

Question 3

The total number of alcohol that purchase operations undertaken in un-licensed premises?

Question 4

The total number of on-licensed premises which passed/failed alcohol test purchase operations?

Answer

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 22 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 it has been decided to refuse access to the information you have requested. Under Section 22 (1) of the Act the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) is not obliged to disclose information that is held with a view to its publication at some future date.

The information you requested is intended to be published by PSNI at the end of 2011 or early 2012.

Section 22 is a qualified exemption so therefore the PSNI is obliged to carry out a Public Interest Test.

Public Interest Test

For Release

Release of the requested information would lead to better understanding of the Test Purchase of Alcohol Scheme and aid accountability in ensuring the pilot operations have been conducted satisfactorily.

For Retention

The PSNI have undertaken to conduct a full public Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) on the Test Purchase of Alcohol Scheme in conjunction with the annual review of the policy. Therefore, information that would answer this request has already been planned for public release at the end of 2011 or early 2012 when the police process and Use of Powers is being reviewed one year after being used by PSNI.

Only approved PSNI pilot operations have been undertaken to date. The purpose of these operations was to assess the operational effectiveness of the draft policy in relation to test purchasing of alcohol. The Criminal Justice Department have advised that it is imperative that they follow the original publication schedule in relation to the results of these operational pilots. All information gathered within the exercises is obtained from child volunteers acting on behalf of the PSNI. To ensure their anonymity and safety, the PSNI wish to ensure that it makes its own administrative arrangements before this information is released to the public.

Premature release of this information could also undermine the effectiveness of the scheme. To release statistics on the pilot scheme at this stage would be likely to prejudice a wider range of test purchase of alcohol operations at a time when the official policy is about to be launched, and have a detrimental effect on the conduct of alcohol trade.

Decision

Although there are valid factors favouring the release of this information, for reasons outlined above which could undermine the effectiveness of the scheme, the public interest in the PSNI following its original publication schedule is stronger at this time. My decision would be to not release any information at this current time and wait for future publication.

If you have any queries regarding your request please write or contact the Freedom of Information Team on 028 9070 0164. Please remember to quote the reference number listed above in any future communications with the Freedom of Information Team.

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.