



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2012-02494

Keyword: Complaints/Discipline

Subject: Complaints of Racism

Request and Answer:

Question

Please provide details of complaints of anti-Scottish, anti-Irish or anti-Welsh racism made by individuals against members of the public or organisations including businesses, schools, local authorities, etc, in each of the last ten years for which figures are available.

I would like the response to include, for each year during the period:

The number of allegations made

The nature of each allegation

The method of resolving the complaint – i.e. by preliminary inquiry, formal or informal investigation and/or reference to the CPS, etc

Answer

Section 17(5) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Police Service of Northern Ireland, 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 (18hrs).

The Office of the Police Ombudsman provides an independent police complaints system under the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998. This Office deals with complaints against police officers by members of the public. Details of allegations of anti-Scottish, anti-Irish or anti-Welsh racism against police officers would be contained in OMB50 complaint forms which are sent by the Police Ombudsman to PSNI, Professional Standards Department. PSD do not record/categorise these forms and for the time frame requested there would be in excess of 30,000 forms. Allowing 1 minute to check each document would equate to approximately 500 hours which grossly exceeds the time permitted under legislation.

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. PSD has advised that they could provide the number of police officers disciplined at a formal misconduct hearing as a result of an allegation of anti-Scottish, anti-Irish or anti-Welsh racism since 2002.

The Police Ombudsman's website provides statistical information on complaints against police categorised by year and nature of allegation www.policeombudsman.org

If you have any queries regarding your request or the 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.psni.police.uk

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