



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2012-00892

Keyword: Crime

Subject: Domestic Violence in Belfast over the Last Three Years

Request and Answer:

Question 1

I am writing to request information regarding domestic violence in Belfast over the last three years.

I would like to find out how many incidents of domestic violence have been reported to police in the city from January 2009 until January 2012.

Question 2

If possible could I have a total figure and a break down for each of the years; for example from January 2009 to January 2010?

Question 3

I would also like to know how many of the reports resulted in a successful prosecution or for whatever reason in an unsuccessful prosecution.

Question 4

I would like to have figures for how many reports were not proceeded with because the alleged victim withdrew their statement.

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 (18 hours).

The information requested in question 4 is not readily available. It would be necessary to conduct a manual trawl of incidents in Belfast over the last 3 years, to ascertain if a withdrawal statement was recorded and then determine if the file was referred to the Public Prosecution Service.

There has been approximately 6,413 recorded domestic crimes over the last 3 years. Based on 5 minutes to check each incident, it is estimated this process would take approximately 534 hours.

There has been approximately 16,894 domestic incidents over the last 3 years. Based on 5 minutes to check each incident, it is estimated this process would take approximately 1,407 hours.

The total estimate for retrieval would be approximately 1,941 hours and would therefore greatly exceed the 18 hour cost limit.

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 prior to realising 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 the request.

Answer

Information in relation to Recorded Incidents and Crimes with a Domestic Abuse Motivation (Page 26 and Page 27) from 2004 – 2011 can be accessed via the PSNI website using the link provided below:

http://www.psni.police.uk/domestic_abuse_incidents_and_crimes_in_northern_ireland_2004-05_to_2010-11.pdf

The quarterly update for Domestic Abuse Incidents and Crimes Recorded by the Police in N.Ireland up to 31 December 2011 can be accessed via the PSNI website using the link provided below:

http://www.psni.police.uk/quarterly_domestic_abuse_bulletin_apr-dec_11_12.pdf

For your information the Public Prosecution Service is the principal prosecuting authority in Northern Ireland and will take decisions as to prosecution in cases investigated by the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

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.psni.police.uk

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