



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2012-01876

Keyword: Crime

Subject: Facebook and Twitter Incidents

Request and Answer:

Question 1

The number of recorded incidents where the following is mentioned:

- a) Twitter
- b) Facebook
- c) Either Facebook or Twitter (if technically possible)

I would like this data from April 1 2009 to present.

Question 2

How many incidents resulting from Twitter and/or Facebook is the force investigating/has investigated since April 1 2009 to present

Question 3

How many complaints has the force received relating in some way to Twitter and/or Facebook since April 1 2009 to present?

Question 4

The number of arrests made involving Twitter and/or Facebook in some way, such as offensive tweets or re-tweets, since April 1 2009 to present?

Question 5

Details of the cases (as much as is available to the public) involving the use of Twitter and/or Facebook since April 1 2009 to present including when it happened, where, why they were arrested/charged, and what happened to the people involved in the case (victims and perpetrators) where applicable.

If it is not possible to search the notes for details of sites referred to above for cost grounds or technical reasons, please provide information of the incidents logged where Facebook and/or Twitter is cited.

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 is not recorded in an easily retrievable format. ICS (Information Communication Services) has advised that there are approximately 3.5 million incidents recorded in the time-frame requested. In relation to questions 2 – 5 of your request, retrieval of the information would require a manual trawl of all these incidents to determine the nature of each. Estimating an average of 15 minutes to examine each record, the retrieval process would take approximately 875,000 hours and would grossly exceed the cost limit of 18 hours.

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 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 costs 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 1

Twitter - 58 incidents

Facebook - 2411 incidents

Either Facebook or Twitter (if technically possible) - 2441 incidents

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.psnj.police.uk

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