



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2012-00081

Keyword: Human Resources

Subject: Number of Police Officers With Criminal Convictions

Request and Answer:

Question

Could I have the following information under Freedom of Information?

How many police officers currently working for the PSNI have criminal convictions?

Please give number of officers along with offences convicted of.

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.

In an attempt to retrieve the information relevant to your request PSNI Human Resources would first have to look through the personnel files of around 8000 officers (including part-time constables) to identify those with a criminal conviction. A list of names would then be compiled and sent to Criminal Records Office (CRO), containing the names, DOBs and addresses of all officers with a criminal conviction. CRO can only search the criminal records of identified individuals; CRO would then have to search for every identified individual to establish the nature of their conviction(s). It has been estimated that this criminal record check, calculated at 6 members of staff checking 350 nominals a day would take 20 working days which would grossly exceed the £450 cost ceiling as set by the Secretary of State.

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. It may be possible to retrieve

within cost, subject to any exemptions that may apply, the total number of PSNI officers who have received a criminal conviction whilst serving as police officers, where the conviction was reported to Professional Standards Department (a time-frame would need to be specified, i.e. within the last 5 years). However, not all criminal convictions are referred to PSD, as some minor convictions are dealt with at local management level e.g. careless driving. The PSNI does not maintain a central record of fixed penalty ticket notices issued to police officers.

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 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.