



## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



**Request Number:** F-2012-01180

**Keyword:** Organisational Information/Governance

**Subject:** Private Sector delivery of Public Services

### Request and Answer:

#### Question

As part of an on-going research project we are undertaking on the size/scope of the private sector delivery of public services, we would like to request some information relating to your operations with third-party providers under the Freedom of Information Act.

For each of the below service areas (1,2,3), can you please indicate:

- a) Total expenditure with third-party providers for the provision of the service in the police authority's catchment area in 2011.
  - b) If the provision of the service was open for competitive tender in 2011. If only a proportion of the service was open to tender, please provide the split by value terms (for example, X% of total expenditure on the delivery of the service is open for competitive tender from third-party providers, irrespective of whether a third-party provider was chosen as part of the tender process).
  - c) If the service was provided in-house by the police or if it was outsourced to a third party provider. If the service provision was mixed, please provide the split between providers by value. (Please note that staff-related pay and wages is to be included within the cost of service provision).
- 1) Management of custody suite operations (includes full management of custody suite operations, including 'street to suite' transportation, detainee welfare including catering, cleaning and laundry, reception duties at custody suites, security).
  - 2) Fleet management (includes storage, repairs, maintenance, MOT and servicing and associated administration, but excludes procurement of the vehicles themselves).
  - 3) Forensic services (from on-site crime scene examination/management to off-site forensic science services)

Note: For the purposes of each request, a 'third-party provider' is defined as any non-publicly owned/controlled institution – to include private firms, charities, universities and other non-for-profit but independent bodies, but excludes publicly controlled but arms-length institutions such as Housing

Associations.

By competitive tender we mean that the delivery of the service was open for bids from different organisations, for example on supply2.gov.uk, regardless of whether there were no bids received or the final decision was to provide the service in-house.

### **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.

The information requested is not held centrally within PSNI. Therefore in an attempt to respond to your request I contacted the record owners within each of the District Command Units and various Departments. They were each asked to provide time estimates as to how long it would take to retrieve the information from their separate systems. For example for the 8 District Command Units to retrieve the information required to respond to question 1 the management of custody suite operations and specifically, 'street to suite transportation', would require a manual trawl of the monthly statistics figures which capture the time of arrest and then the time of arrival at custody suite. It is estimated that for the 8 Districts to respond to this part of the request would take an estimated total of 88 hours.

For the information to be retrieved for question 3 regarding Forensic services for the Departments I have been advised that it would involve detailed searches both manually and electronically. This would include external forensic services, CCTV examinations, enhancements etc. The estimate for this time frame is due to the fact that this information is held in central budgets and staff would have to research each invoice. On carrying out a general review of these budgets there have been over 800 individual transactions in 2011/12 and to provide a response 2010/11 would also need to be included. It is estimated that to provide a response would take an estimated total of 48 hours.

It is therefore estimated that the total time required for all Districts and Departments to locate, retrieve and extract the information for the 3 questions would take an estimated 158 1/2 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 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.

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](mailto: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](http://www.psni.police.uk)

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