



## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



**Request Number:** F-2012-02844

**Keyword:** Organisational Information/Governance

**Subject:** Funding and Staff Time For Trade Unions

### Request and Answer:

#### Question

I am writing to obtain information about the total amount of money paid to trade unions by Police Service in Northern Ireland, the amount of staff time spent on trade union duties and / or activities and the payment of subscriptions.

To outline my query as clearly as possible, I am requesting:

The total amount of money paid to all trade unions for financial years a) 2010-11 and b) 2011-12. Where possible please provide a list of total payments made to each different trade union. However if this disaggregated information is not available please continue to provide a total figure for trade union payments. In response to this question, please only include direct payments to the unions from your organisation, not membership dues deducted from staff salaries.

Please note that the guidelines issued by ACAS state that: "An employee who is a member of an independent trade union recognised by the employer in respect of that description of employee is to be permitted reasonable time off during working hours to take part in any trade union activity. An employee who is a member of an independent and recognised trade union is also permitted to take reasonable time off during working hours for the purposes of accessing the services of a Union Learning Representative (provided those services are services for which the Union Learning Representative is entitled to time off)."

If the information is not recorded, there is no way of ascertaining whether the time off provided is reasonable. I therefore do not expect the response that the organisation does not hold this information. If a formal record is not kept then I will accept a reasonable estimate.

Please also note that all of the questions are separate requests for information; question one refers to any direct payments to trade unions whereas question two relates to any staff time spent on trade union duties / activities and finally question three relates to the deduction of member dues by the organisation on the trade unions' behalf. If the response to any of the questions is 'nil' then please continue to respond to the other questions.

Clarification was received that the wording 'staff that were provided' refers to staff employed by the agency who spend at least part time on union duties. This is measured in full equivalent – the equivalent of full time employment, this can therefore be a decimal or less than 1. Secondly only

staff employed by the agency are concerned in this FOI.

**Answer**

This is to inform you that the Police Service of Northern Ireland has now completed its search for the information you requested. The decision has been taken to disclose the located information to you in full.

I can advise that the PSNI do not hold any information in relation to this part of your request, as I have been advised by our Finance Branch that no money has been paid direct to trade unions.

**Question**

Which trade unions your organisation provide staff time to work on trade union duties and / or activities (sometimes called 'Trade Union facility time') in i) 2010-11 and ii) 2011-12.

The number of full time equivalent staff that were provided for each trade union in i) 2010-11 and ii) 2011-12.

**Answer**

The trade unions are NIPSA and UNITE.

There are 12 NIPSA Departmental Representatives who are permitted facilities time to attend Departmental Committee meetings. These meetings are scheduled to be held on a bi-monthly basis and would normally extract the individual from the workplace for approximately 4 hours. This equates to a total of 24 hours per person or approximately 290 hours for all 12 representatives per annum.

In addition to NIPSA representatives PSNI have 2 members of staff who are seconded to NIPSA on a full time basis.

There are 5 UNITE Local Representatives who are permitted facilities time to attend bi-monthly management meetings and meetings pertaining to local issues as required. 3 of the UNITE representatives attend the scheduled bi-monthly meetings, which would normally extract the individual from the workplace for approximately 4 hours. This equates to an approximate total of 12 hours per person or approximately 72 hours for all 3 representatives per annum. The other 2 representatives cover local Health & Safety matters and are permitted facilities time to attend to matters as they arise. This is estimated to equate to approximately 12 hours per person or approximately 24 hours per annum.

As facilities time is not formally recorded but facilitated by arrangement with local management, all of the above figures are estimates.

**Question**

Does your organisation automatically deduct trade union subscriptions from staff salaries in the payroll process in order to pass them on to the union? If so, how much did your organisation charge each union for this service in a) 2010-11 and b) 2011-12?

**Answer**

PSNI automatically deduct union dues if agreed by the employee. There is no charge for this service.

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](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.