



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2013-04235

Keyword: Crime

Subject: Reports of On-line Abuse

Request and Answer:

Question 1

In your authority, how many complaints of online abuse were reported under section 127 of the Communications Act 2003, broken down year by year for 2013 (as recent as data is available for), 2012, 2011, 2010 and 2009?

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.

A search on the PSNI crime recording system revealed that there are a total of 1677 offences falling under **section 127 of the communications act 2003** and where the offence was reported to PSNI from 01/01/2009 onwards.

The search encompassed the following offences:

- sending menacing messages through a public electronic communications network
- sending malicious messages
- improper use of public electronic communications network
- improper use of electronic communications to cause anxiety
- causing improper use of public electronic communications network
- causing improper use of electronic communications to cause anxiety
- persistent improper use of electronic communications to cause anxiety

The breakdown by year is:

2009: 235
2010: 272
2011: 416
2012: 443
2013: 311

Please note that PSNI are not able to confirm if the above offences specifically relate to 'online abuse'. To do this, each offence would have to be manually opened to check the

corresponding incident logs to check if online abuse is mentioned.

Question 2

Of those complaints, how many for which formal investigations were launched, and of those cases where investigations were launched, in how many cases charges were brought against alleged offenders, again from down year by year for 2013 (as recent as data is available for), 2012, 2011, 2010 and 2009?

Answer

Of the 1677 offences, a total of 1469 were investigated.

For the purposes of this FOI, investigated is considered to be where an arrest was made in connection with the offence OR the offence is linked to a case file for investigation/prosecution purposes.

Out of the 1469 investigated offences, a total of 233 offences resulted in a charge being issued to the suspect/s for the offence.

The breakdown by year is as follows:

2009:

Total offences: 235

Total offences investigated: 144

Total offences investigated and charged: 61

2010:

Total offences: 272

Total offences investigated: 246

Total offences investigated and charged: 25

2011:

Total offences: 416

Total offences investigated: 398

Total offences investigated and charged: 52

2012:

Total offences: 443

Total offences investigated: 402

Total offences investigated and charged: 48

2013:

Total offences: 311

Total offences investigated: 279

Total offences investigated and charged: 47

In addition the PSNI can Neither Confirm or Deny (NCND) that it holds any other information relevant to the request by virtue of the following section of the Act:

Section 23(5) – Information Supplied By, Or Relating To, Bodies Dealing With Security Matters

Section 23(5) is an absolute exemption and therefore there is no requirement to conduct a harm or public interest test.

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.

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.