



## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



**Request Number:** F-2013-04227

**Keyword:** Organisational Information/Governance

**Subject:** Harassment and Threats Related to Social Media

**Request and Answer:**

### Question

We would like to request under the Freedom of Information Act the number of recorded incidents of harassment and threats (see definition below\*) related to social media as well as complaints about alleged offences committed through social media which come under the definition of 'hate crime'.

This should include any complaints where any of the following terms are mentioned in the MO Notes: Twitter, Facebook, Ask FM, Google+, Google Plus, Path, Pheed, Snap Chat, Tumblr, Reddit, MySpace, Omegle and Bebo.

Could you also note in how many of these cases was the abuse/threats etc of a sectarian nature.

We need this data over three time frames:

- a) 1 August 2010 to 31 July 2011
- b) 1 August 2011 to 31 July 2012
- c) 1 August 2012 to 31 July 2013

If possible within the time frame allowed under the Freedom of Information Act, we require this information to be broken down by month.

\*Incidents of harassment and threats include: breach of restraining order; causing intentional harassment/alarm/distress; putting people in fear of violence; racially/religiously aggravated harassment with fear of violence; racially/religiously aggravated harassment without violence; threats to damage property; threats to kill.

### 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.

Please see the table at the end of this correspondence detailing recorded offences where the mo (modus operandi) field is contained reference to the specified social media sites.

**Please note:** The data has been extracted based on the mo remarks and mo free text fields on NICHE recording database containing reference to any of the specified social media sites. There may be offences where the social media sites have been involved and the information may not have been input into either of these fields and therefore will not be extracted. Also, only 255 characters can be extracted from these fields so again, if the reference to the social media site is contained in the text after the first 255 characters then this will not be extracted. The information extracted is based on the recorded offences of Harassment and Threats to Kill, the definition you have provided is not applicable to recorded crime. The definition of Hate crime is available at the link provided below:

[http://www.psni.police.uk/hate\\_motivation\\_definitions.pdf](http://www.psni.police.uk/hate_motivation_definitions.pdf)

There were 2 harassment or threats to kill offences where the mo remarks field contained reference to the specified social media sites that were identified as hate crime, one of which was sectarian.

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.

**Recorded offences<sup>1</sup> where the mo remarks field contained reference to the specified<sup>2</sup> social media sites**

Reported Date	Recorded offences
Aug-2010	1
Sep-2010	0
Oct-2010	0
Nov-2010	0
Dec-2010	1
Jan-2011	1
Feb-2011	1
Mar-2011	1
Apr-2011	0
May-2011	2
Jun-2011	0
Jul-2011	0
Aug-2011	4
Sep-2011	0
Oct-2011	0
Nov-2011	2
Dec-2011	0
Jan-2012	0
Feb-2012	2
Mar-2012	0
Apr-2012	3
May-2012	0
Jun-2012	1
Jul-2012	0
Aug-2012	0
Sep-2012	1
Oct-2012	3
Nov-2012	3
Dec-2012	1
Jan-2013	0
Feb-2013	1
Mar-2013	2
Apr-2013	5
May-2013	0
Jun-2013	1
Jul-2013	3

Source: PSNI statistics branch

<sup>1</sup> Recorded offences include Harassment and threats to kill

<sup>2</sup> Facebook, Twitter, Ask FM, Google+, Google Plus, Path, Pheed, Snap Chat, Tumblr, Reddit, MySpace, Omegle and Bebo

Please note: This information is based on data extracted from a live crime recording system and may be subject to change. It is dependent on the information having been input into the system in such a way as to identify those records that are relevant.

Figures within the current financial year (i.e. from 1st April 2013) are provisional and will be subject to change.