



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2014-00842

Keyword: Organisational Information/Governance

Subject: Hearing Loss Compensation

Request and Answer:

Question 1

Recent news reports stated that over £120 million was awarded to police officers as compensation for hearing loss sustained as a result of their work and half of this money went to providing legal costs for those involved. Could I ask you some questions about this specifically:

Where did this money come from and was it paid out of public funds?

Answer

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

The compensation is paid out of public funds made up of funding from the Treasury and from within PSNI's budget.

Question 2

Did any police officers who claimed for hearing loss not receive any compensation?

Answer

Yes.

Question 3

Why were the legal fees on average £8,000 per officer when the only action required by lawyers was to ask a few questions and arrange an audiogram?

Answer

The question misrepresents the role of a legal team in this litigation. Once proceedings are issued against the Chief Constable, he as a defendant has to, through his legal team, engage in the legal process to protect his interests and position, carry out an investigation of each individual claim and seek to deal with it in the most appropriate manner. The lawyers deal with each claim on its own individual merits and seek to achieve the best possible outcome for the Chief Constable. PSNI's approach has always been to ensure they are thoroughly investigated to ensure that only officers who have proven to have sustained hearing loss/tinnitus as a result of their employment within PSNI are compensated.

Question 4

Who provided the medical evidence of hearing loss for the officers and what was that evidence?

Answer

Medical evidence is provided by independent medical experts. The evidence is specific and confidential to each case.

Question 5

Why was the evidence not presented and subject to scrutiny in court?

Answer

It is a matter for the Chief Constable to determine how litigation is conducted. If it is considered appropriate that any individual case progresses to hearing, then all the evidence is presented and scrutinized by the court.

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.psnipolice.uk

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