



## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



**Request Number:** F-2015-03472

**Keyword:** Crime

**Subject:** Complaints Regarding Misuse of Apps

### Request and Answer:

#### Question

I am trying to establish the extent to which your force has to deal with complaints regarding the alleged misuse of branded internet applications ('apps'), where the victim was a person under 18 years of age.

Specifically, I wish to identify the specific app brands accounting for the most complaints and referrals to your force and any trends over recent years.

Examples might include things like Facebook, Twitter, Kik, ooVoo, Omegle, Instagram, Facetime. My initial request is for data. To make your task easier, I am happy for your response to be limited to the 5 apps most frequently mentioned in complaints. If you are able to list more, then that would be welcome.

#### Question 1

Would it be possible to list those apps most frequently mentioned in complaints made to your force for each of the past 5 years, with the number of complaints received for each app.

#### Question 2

I would also request an age breakdown of the children involved.

#### Question 3

Where possible could you please provide a breakdown of the suspected offences cited in these complaints?

#### Question 4

Provided this falls within the time and cost limits, I would also request a breakdown of the nature of the complainant. For example, was it a child/parent or carer/school/other?

However, if you were unable to meet this request fully because of time/cost limits then I am happy for it to be limited to just Requests 1 and 2.

Additionally, if your force has compiled any analysis of crimes/complaints relating to apps involving children which isn't already in the public domain, and provides the information requested above, then that would also suffice. I would be happy to receive this with any redactions to remove information which would identify individuals or schools.

## 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 record keeper has confirmed that in order to retrieve the requested information it would be necessary to search the PSNI crime recording system for crimes recorded by the PSNI where the call for service includes the terms listed in the request (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) and where the victim is under 18. However this would only show those offences since the start of 2010/11 where these named 'apps' were mentioned within the call for service made to the PSNI. In order to establish the circumstances in which the 'app' was referenced in the call for service and whether it represents a 'misuse of the app' would require each individual record to be manually examined. A preliminary search of our records indicates that in the last 12 months alone (1<sup>st</sup> November 2014 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2015) there have been over 200 such records which would require a manual inspection and it has been determined that it would take approximately 33 hours to perform this task, putting this FOI request over the legislative cost limit of 18 hours.

In addition, the record keeper has confirmed that they do not have access to the details on the complainant in their data extracts and to provide a breakdown of the nature of the complainant, as requested in question 4, would require a further manual inspection of each incident, putting this request further over cost.

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. Unfortunately, as previously shown, it would exceed the legislative cost limit to provide the requested information for the first question of this FOI request for even a single year and as a result there is no refinement possible in this case.

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.