



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2015-03071

Keyword: Crime

Subject: Incidents Relating to Weddings and Funerals

Request and Answer:

Question

Further to previous FOI (F-2015-02856)

Would it be possible for you to liaise with an English counterpart to see how they managed to fulfil the request with a view to finding a way to answer it as they did under the budget?

Response

I have read the link to the news article that you have provided and have examined a number of the FOI responses from our UK counterparts, which are available online. It states in the news article that the police services which were able to provide the requested information did so by carrying out a "search of police records for the phrases wedding, funeral, or wake".

This is the same method employed by the PSNI to try and answer your FOI request but due to the large number of incidents found (over 2000 for a single year) it would have been over cost for the PSNI to examine each of these incidents to determine the nature of the crimes reported to the PSNI.

As stated in the news article you provided, for the 21 police services who were able to answer the FOI request there was a total of "542 calls relating to weddings, funerals or wakes in 2014/15". This is considerably fewer than the number of calls received by the PSNI and it is for this reason that these police services were able to respond to the request within the legislative cost limit.

Query

It occurs to me that, using that search method, you would be able to tell me precisely how many incidents there has been each year. I'm not sure how onerous it would be to do this, but I wonder if it would mean you were reasonably able to do up to five years? Could you let me know if this could be a way forward?

Response to Query

Yes, if you wish to put in a new FOI request asking for the number of incidents reported to the PSNI where the term 'wedding', 'funeral', or 'wake' was used it should be possible to retrieve an exact number for the last 5 years.

However please be aware that as before this would only show the number of calls made to the PSNI where those search terms appear and without checking each incident individually we could not

confirm that a crime occurred at one of these events only that the term was used in the call made to the PSNI. It is entirely possible that one of these terms may appear in a call for service for an incident which is not directly related to the event itself.

Question

Yes, can you do that please? Will perhaps limit it to wedding and funeral as "wake" could be used in a different context. Any more detail (such as policing district area) would be really useful if you can manage it within the framework.

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.

During the five years from 1st September 2010 to 31st August 2015 there were 9,153 calls for service made to the PSNI that included the wording 'wedding' or 'funeral'. There were 699 crimes resulting out of these calls for service.

Please note that a small sample of the calls for service were examined and this indicates that the records identified do not all directly relate to an incident which occurred at a 'wedding' or 'funeral'. Examples of such incidents reported include reports of lost or stolen wedding rings, requests for police assistance with funerals taking place (e.g. traffic control, cones required etc) and incidents where the reference to 'funeral' is because the incident location was outside or close to a funeral home. To read through each of the 699 crimes to establish the precise circumstances and location of each incident would be over cost, taking around 116 hours. To read through each call for service would considerably longer.

Compared to the 21 police services mentioned previously, who were able to answer your previous FOI response and who collectively received 542 calls relating to weddings, funerals or wakes in 2014/15. The figure extracted by the PSNI would not appear to be in any way comparable with these other police services and in fact could be highly misleading.

Please note that if this information were to be used out of the context of what it represents, it would show a highly inaccurate picture for Northern Ireland.

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.psni.police.uk

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