



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2015-00826

Keyword: Operational Policing

Subject: Deaths In Custody

Request and Answer:

Question 1

Would you be able to tell me how many people have died in police custody (or following Police contact) in Northern Ireland since 2000.

Clarification: To clarify I meant following police contact to be ' within 24 hours' or deaths that the police ombudsman would normally investigate. I am particularly interested in the figure between broken down into deaths that occurred while the person was in custody.

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.

Initial searches have shown that there were 6 deaths in police custody since 2002.

I can advise that to undertake a search on deaths within 24 hours following contact with police would entail the searching approximately 6500 investigations and interrogating two electronic databases as there is no way to filter for the information requested. Each investigation would require to be opened and read, to retrieve any information relevant to your request and this is only for deaths when an officer was disciplined. This would put your whole request over the cost threshold.

The Police Ombudsman of Northern Ireland is responsible for investigating such deaths and you may be able to obtain more detailed information from his office. The Police Ombudsman would also be aware of any reports which were published in connection with deaths after contact with police or while in custody.

Question 2

Also, how many were female, how many were male and cause of death if established, and if there are any published statistics or reports on the investigations.

Of the 6 deaths in custody that the PSNI have identified above the records indicate that all deaths were male and that 3 were recorded as being due to natural causes, 2 as suicide and 1 as accidental.

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.