



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2016-00095

Keyword: Organisational Information/Governance

Subject: Media Training

Request and Answer:

Question 1

Please provide details of all media training received by PSNI officers in each of the last five years.

Question 2

Please confirm the position held by all those who received training.

Question 3

Please confirm the identities of all senior officers who received training and confirm what department they belong to.

Question 4

Please confirm when the training took place.

Question 5

Please include details of all costs associated with the training.

Question 6

Please confirm who carried out the training.

Answer

Your request for information has now been considered. In respect of Section 1(1)(a) of the Act I can confirm that the Police Service of Northern Ireland does hold information to which your request relates. The decision has been taken not to supply all of the information you have requested and the reasons for this are set out in more detail below.

I have today decided to:

- disclose information in response to questions 1 to 5 in full;
- fully exempt information in response to questions 6 pursuant to the provisions of Section 40 of the Act.

Question 1

Please provide details of all media training received by PSNI officers in each of the last five years.

Answer

Searches were conducted by the relevant record keepers to determine if any media training, either internal or external has been undertaken by PSNI officers within the last 5 years.

Searches were also conducted of those media courses available on the internal PSNI College Course Catalogue to determine how many PSNI officers have undertaken a relevant training course. A search of the Police College Course Catalogue for the last 5 years reveals no record of any such Media training occurring in the last 5 years.

Within 'Leadership Training' there is a 'Media Skills' qualification but this has not been assigned to any PSNI officer in the last 5 years. Similarly, within the 'Senior Leadership Development Programme' a 'Media Skills Training' qualification was identified however this also has not been assigned to anyone in the last 5 years.

Further searches showed that external media training has been provided to PSNI officers in the last 5 years with a total of 8 training sessions have been undertaken for the purpose of providing officers with the ability to respond to media queries in a confident and clear manner. Please note that records are only held in relation to the most recent training session which took place in March 2015.

Question 2

Please confirm the position held by all those who received training.

Answer

As stated above, records for the full time period stipulated are not held, however the records from March 2015 do indicate that this training was made available to a range of PSNI officers, ranked between Sergeant and Superintendent ranks across a range of policing areas.

Question 3

Please confirm the identities of all senior officers who received training and confirm what department they belong to.

Answer

As stated, records for the full time period requested are not held, however the records from March 2015 show that none of the senior executive team received media training during this training session.

Question 4

Please confirm when the training took place.

Answer

As stated above, the most recent media training took place in March 2015.

Question 5

Please include details of all costs associated with the training.

Answer

The total cost of this external media training for the requested 5 year period is £13,500.

Question 6

Please confirm who carried out the training.

Answer

Section 17(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Police Service of Northern Ireland, when refusing to provide such information (because the information is exempt) to provide you the applicant with a notice which:

- (a) states that fact,
- (b) specifies the exemption in question and
- (c) states (if not otherwise apparent) why the exemption applies.

The exemption/s, as well as the factors the Department considered when deciding where the public interest lies, are listed below:

Section 40 (2)(a)(b) by virtue of Section 40 (3)(a)(i) – Personal Information

The full text of exemptions can be found at www.legislation.gov.uk and further guidance on how they operate can be located on the Information Commissioners Office website www.ico.org.uk.

When a request is received by PSNI under the Freedom of Information Act, we must consider if the information can be released to the public. The requested information asks for the details of whoever carried out the media training and to disclose this would equate to a release of that individuals personal information. We have therefore considered whether the disclosure of this personal data is subject to the exemption at section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 by virtue of s40 (3)(a)(i). If the disclosure of the personal data would contravene any of the eight data protection principles contained within the Data Protection Act 1998, the exemption at section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 will apply. Section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 by virtue of section 40(3)(a)(i) states:-

“(2) Any information to which a request for information relates is also exempt information if

- a) it constitutes personal data which do not fall within subsection and
- b) either the first or the second condition below is satisfied.

(3) The first condition is –

- a) in a case where the information falls within any of paragraphs (a) to (d) of the definition of “data” in section 1(1) of the Data Protection Act 1998, that the disclosure of the information to a member of the public otherwise than under this Act would contravene –
 - i. any of the data protection principles ...”

The eight principles within the Data Protection Act, are principles of good information handling standards which the PSNI must comply with in relation to how it handles personal information, including deciding whether to disclose it or not. In particular, the first principle requires personal data to be processed ‘fairly and lawfully’. In considering whether it is ‘fair’ to the individual(s) concerned, to release this information about them, the PSNI considered the likely expectations of those providing the aforementioned media training. The threat level in Northern Ireland is still classified as ‘Severe’ and terrorist groups have in the past issued threats to anyone providing a service to PSNI advising that they will be regarded as a legitimate target. Under these circumstances, service providers would reasonably expect their personal information to be held by PSNI securely and it is unlikely that it would be within the expectations of these individuals that any specific personal information would be disclosed to anyone outside of the PSNI organisation. Therefore disclosure would be in contravention of the first Data Protection Principle as it would be ‘unfair’ to the individual or individuals concerned to release it and so the PSNI has decided to withhold that information.

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.