



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2018-01543

Keyword: Complaints/Discipline

Subject: Criminal Convictions of Police Officers

Request and Answer:

Your request for information below has now been considered. In respect of Section 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). I can confirm that the Police Service of Northern Ireland does hold the information you have requested and this is being provided to you. We further consider that some of the information you seek is exempt by virtue of Section 40 FOIA and have detailed our rationale as to why this exemption applies. We have also provided you with links to guidance issued by the Information Commissioner's Office which we have followed in responding to your request.

Request 1

Please provide, from 2013 to the present every case that a police officer in your force was convicted of a criminal offence, including the date of the conviction, and what the officer was convicted of.

Answer

The attached spreadsheet will provide details of all officers who have been convicted of a criminal offence.

Request 2

For each case, please state whether have you exercised your powers of pension forfeiture under regulation K5 of the Police Pension Regulations 1987. And if so, please state how much of the pension was forfeited.

Answer

We can advise that one of the above cases has been referred to the Northern Ireland Policing Board for forfeiture of pension.

However it has been decided to withhold the specific case it relates to.

Information concerning the criminal convictions of serving police officers, including when they were convicted, is often in the public domain through press reporting. As the date of conviction has been released as part of this response, it may be possible, through corroboration of other information which is available, to establish which officer has had his pension recommended for forfeiture

Therefore this information is being withheld for the responses as outlined below:

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 20009 requires the Police Service of Northern Ireland

(PSNI), when refusing to provide such information (because the information is exempt) to provide you the applicant with a notice which:

- a) states the fact
- b) specifies the exemptions(s) in question
- c) states (if not otherwise apparent) why the exemption applies

The exemption is as follows

Section 40(2)(a)(b) by virtue of 40(3)(A)(a) Personal Information – Information constitutes personal data and disclosure would contravene any of the Data Protection principles.

We have explained below in our response why these exemptions are engaged and the full text of exemptions can be found at www.legislation.gov.uk. Further guidance on how they operate can be located on the Information Commissioners Office website www.ico.org.uk.

Section 40 (2) of the FOIA is an absolute exemption which means there is no requirement on the PSNI to consider whether there is a public interest in disclosure. It is an interface exemption and we must consider whether release of the information would breach the General Data Protection Regulations ('GDPR') or the Data Protection Act 2018 ('DPA') Third party personal information in relation to witness statements, police personnel, forensics staff etc. and this information constitutes their 'personal data' under the GDPR (Article 4) and DPA (Part 1 s.3).

Under the Freedom of Information Act, PSNI must consider if information can be released into the public domain. I 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)(a). As this information is 'personal data', PSNI considered whether disclosure would contravene any of the six data protection principles contained within the GDPR or DPA.

The six data protection principles are good information handling standards which 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 any individual to release information about them, PSNI considered the likely expectations of those individuals and the nature of the information involved. Individuals must have confidence that their information is treated sensitively and appropriately by PSNI. We consider those individuals would not have any reasonable expectation PSNI would disclose such information of this nature about them. We consider it would be extremely unfair to those individuals and therefore a breach of the first principle of data protection legislation. This information is therefore exempt under section 40 (2) of the FOIA as it contravenes data protection legislation to release it and the PSNI has made the decision to withhold that information.

We can advise that one of the above cases has been referred to the Northern Ireland Policing Board for forfeiture of pension. It has however been decided not to reveal which case this relates to. Information concerning the criminal convictions of serving police officers, including when they were convicted, is often in the public domain through press reporting. As the date of conviction has been released as part of this response, it may be possible, through corroboration of other information which is available, to establish which officer has had his pension recommended for forfeiture.

In this instance I am satisfied that if released as public disclosure, this information would impact on the subjects' work and family life, would therefore be a breach of the Data Protection Act and as a result is withheld under S40(2).

This response has been provided by Professional Standards, Legacy & Justice Department.

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.