



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2018-00132

Keyword: Operational Policing

Subject: Police Dog Training

Request and 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 (PSNI) does hold information to which your request relates. The decision has been taken to disclose the following.

Request 1

Please could I find out if your force breeds (or uses breeders) to provide police dogs?

Answer

The PSNI do not breed their own dogs or use breeders.

Request 2

If you do not use either of the above methods, please can you explain where you get your supply of new police dogs from?

Answer

The PSNI use various sources including other United Kingdom police dog sections and specialist working dog suppliers. The PSNI have limited success in obtaining dogs via public donations, animal shelters and rescue charities.

Request 3

Please can you tell me how many new police dogs have been trained for each year for the past five years, as in the number for 2013 through to 2017?

Answer

The PSNI train dogs as required by operational demand. On average there are two courses per year with each course containing up to four dogs.

Please note that there is no requirement to keep records for this but an Officer has maintained a personal spreadsheet since 2013 (to present date) and I can advise this holds the following information:

- 10 dogs trained to search for explosives
- 3 dogs trained to search for victim recovery
- 8 dogs trained to search for drugs, cash and firearms

- 20 dogs trained for general purpose.

Request 4

What is the average age (or age range) of a new dog undergoing training to become a police dog i.e. is it a puppy?

Answer

The average age (or age range) of a new dog undergoing training to become a police dog is 12 – 24 months.

Request 5

Can you please briefly explain what training entails and how long it lasts for?

Answer

All dogs are trained in accordance with the National Police Chief Council's (NPCC) standards. Training continues throughout the dog's service but initial training lasts between 8 to 12 weeks dependant on the dog's discipline.

Request 6

Please can you tell me how many of the dogs referenced in question four above failed their training?

Answer

Before a course starts, potential dogs are rigorously assessed as to their suitability. Initial Training therefore has a low failure rate.

Request 7

Please can you tell me how many police dogs that start their training fail?

Answer

Please see answer to Request 6.

Request 8

Please can you tell me what happens to these dogs

Answer

Failed General Purpose dogs are exchanged by the supplier. Donated dog's owners have the option of having them returned. Owners who do not want their dog returned are rehomed by the PSNI with suitable families.

Request 9

How many dogs undergoing police training to become new police dogs have been euthanized for each year between 2013 to 2017. What was the reason and how old was each dog?

Answer

No dogs have been euthanized.

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.