



## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



**Request Number:** F-2018-00190

**Keyword:** Organisational Information/Governance

**Subject:** Interpretation/Translation Services

### 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 and this is being provided to you. We further consider the information you seek in request number one is exempt by virtue of Section 38 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 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

The names of the companies you use for interpreting/translation services when a defendant does not speak English.

### Request 2

How much has been spent on the above services, in total, since April 2015?

### Answer

The total spent on Interpretation services since April 2015 is £1,050,028.06.

The total spent on Translation services since April 2015 is £330,951.41.

In response to Request 1, please see below a detailed explanation as to why the information is not being released.

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 38(1)(a) and (b) – Health and Safety.

Section 38 is a prejudice based and qualified exemption. This means that the PSNI must consider the potential harm in release of the requested information and carry out a Public Interest Test (PIT).

### **Harm Test**

Releasing the names of companies used for interpreting/translating would highlight their association with PSNI to terrorists and other criminal groups. Disclosing the name of such a company would likely put that business and its employees at risk of attack by those seeking to deprive the PSNI of essential services and supplies. It should be noted that terrorism in Northern Ireland remains a severe threat and in particular to the PSNI.

### **Public Interest Test**

#### Factors Favouring Disclosure

Releasing the information would promote openness and transparency. There is always a strong public interest in information that relates to the use of public funds and the procurement of services and suppliers.

#### Factors Favouring Non-Disclosure

Terrorist activity is a real and currently severe threat and the PSNI has a duty of care to protect anyone working for the service. The PSNI will not disclose any information which may increase the risk of harm to any individual providing a service to the PSNI. To provide the names of these companies could endanger their employees and that of their families.

#### Decision

Whilst accountability surrounding the use of public funds is always a strong argument in favour of releasing information, the balance will always favour retention where there is a significant risk to the safety of individuals. At this time, the Service is under severe dissident threat and to release the names of companies providing a service to the PSNI could assist terrorists and criminal groups in targeting these individuals.

The release of information under Freedom of Information (FOI) is a release into the public domain and not just to the individual requesting the information. Once information is disclosed under FOI there is no control or limits as to who or how the information is shared with other individuals, therefore a release under FOI is considered a disclosure to the world in general.

In this case, the decision must favour not releasing the name/s of the companies providing interpreting/translation services. The safety of individuals is of paramount importance and the PSNI will not divulge any information which could put lives or property at risk.

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

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](mailto: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](http://www.psni.police.uk)

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