



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2018-00816

Keyword: Organisational Information/Governance

Subject: Civilian Telephone Operator Powers

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 does hold information to which your request relates. The decision has been taken to disclose the following.

Request

I was recently required to provide my name address and DOB in order to speak with a police officer (1600 hours 3/4/18). The telephone call operator refused to pass me through to police in Newtownabbey. Under FOI, where do civilian phone operators get their power to do this? (Name disclosed) the operator flat refused to pass me to Newtownabbey?

Clarification sought

You have asked 'where do civilian phone operators get their power to do this'. Would you please clarify if you are asking for the power to ask for name, address and DOB or the power to refuse to pass your call to Newtownabbey or both?

Clarification received

Both.

Answer

Police do not have any legal power to demand a name, address or date of birth from any caller. The reason a date of birth, name, address and other information is requested from callers is to enable police to provide the best possible response. If these details are refused by the caller, there may be a delay or an adjusted response whilst police make further enquiries.

Call handlers are the first line of contact between the public and police and rely on the full co-operation of any person calling the police for assistance to enable them to provide a service. A refusal to engage fully with the call handler will therefore limit the call handler's options in seeking to provide the best possible service to the caller.

PSNI employs call handlers to take reports of crimes/incidents on behalf of the service, record them, assess the appropriate initial response and forward for further action where appropriate. They do not routinely pass phone calls to individual stations. This is not a "power" in the legal sense, rather a method/system of work aimed at providing a service to the public which is efficient, responsive and accountable. This process is compliant with National Call Handling Standards.

If any member of the public is dissatisfied with the service they receive, they can complain to the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland.

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.psnj.police.uk

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