



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2021-00418

Keyword: Organisational Information/Governance

Subject: Currently Missing Whilst on Bail

Request and Answer:

Your request for information has now been considered. In respect of Section 1(1)(a) of the Act we 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 1

I am happy to take up the refinement offered in previous FOI requests F-2020-02197 & F-2021-00262 so would instead request the current list regarding those actively sought as indicated in your response. The current number of suspected criminals who have disappeared while on bail.

Answer

For this response, '*Suspected criminals who have disappeared while on bail*' has been interpreted to mean individuals who have an active flag against their record of the type '*Wanted for failing to answer bail*'.

As of 24 February 2021, there were 24 individuals meeting the above criterion.

THE FOLLOWING NOTES ARE APPLICABLE TO THE INFORMATION PROVIDED AND IMPORTANT TO NOTE

Information is based on data extracted from a live crime recording system and may be subject to change. It is dependent on the information having been input into the system in such a way as to identify those records that are relevant. It should also be noted the Niche Technical team is not involved in checking reliability and validity of any data input onto Niche and cannot protect the data against any input errors which may have influenced these figures.

Please note: If a suspect does not return on bail and is deemed in breach of his bail a manual act is required by the investigating officer to flag the suspect as 'wanted for arrest' on the NICHE recording database. This is not done on all occasions and therefore the figures do not represent all persons on Bail not returned. Individual analysis would take in excess of the 18 hour cost limit set under the FOI Act.

Request 2

The crimes they were accused of and how long they have been missing for/at large (stating how many still are at large).

Answer

Please see the Excel spreadsheet attached separately to this correspondence.

How long they have been missing for has been interpreted as the number of days between the date on which the 'Wanted for failing to answer bail' flag was created to 24 February 2021.

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Please note: Information is based on data extracted from a live crime recording system and may be subject to change. It is dependent on the information having been input into the system in such a way as to identify those records that are relevant. It should also be noted the Niche Technical team is not involved in checking reliability and validity of any data input onto Niche and cannot protect the data against any input errors which may have influenced these figures.

The 'Linked Offences' column lists the non-resulted offences linked to the person and the occurrence where the flag was added (i.e. linked offences with a current status of 'Resulted' or 'Not charged' have been excluded).

All of the offences recorded on police bail are those that the suspect is suspected of committing but there is insufficient evidence to connect the suspect. When these persons do not return on bail there is no opportunity to dispose of these offences. As a result, offences represent a DATA QUALITY issue. In order to ascertain the accuracy of offences recorded and their ongoing legitimacy individual contact would be required with each investigating officer. This process would again exceed the appropriate cost limit.

Further to this we have to note the initial line that in all cases where bail has been administered by police there is a presumption of innocence. There is insufficient evidence to connect the suspects to the offence or otherwise they would be charged with the offence.

The Court Service may be able to assist your request.

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 Corporate Information Branch, 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 Corporate Information Branch, 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.