



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2022-01268

Keyword: Organisational Information/Governance

Subject: FOI Responsiveness

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

Refinement from F-2022-00814

Thank you for your reply and for offering to provide data in respect of requests 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 8. I look forward to receiving them.

Answers to Requests 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 8 are detailed below:

Request 1

For the period 16th March – 17th July 2020 (i.e., when ICO had indicated a sympathetic approach to delay), provide precise data if available e.g., 15 out of 30 requests, and if not, provide an estimate e.g., 10%, for these questions:

- (a) how many responses to FOI requests were issued within 20 working days of receipt by your organisation?
- (b) how many responses to FOI review requests were issued within 20 working days of receipt of the request for an internal review?
- (c) how many responses to FOI requests were issued within 21 and 60 working days of receipt by your organisation?
- (d) how many responses to FOI review requests were issued within 21 and 60 working days of receipt of the request for an internal review?

Answer

1.a – 193 out of 400 requests

1.b – 7 out of 11 requests

1.c – 187 out of 400 requests

1.d - 3 out of 11 requests

Request 2

For the period 18th July – 8th October 2020 (i.e., during the 'preparing for recovery' phase), provide precise data if available e.g., 15 out of 30 requests, and if not, provide an estimate e.g., 10%, for these questions:

(a) how many responses to FOI requests were issued within 20 working days of receipt by your organisation?

(b) how many responses to FOI review requests were issued within 20 working days of receipt of the request for an internal review?

(c) how many responses to FOI requests were issued within 21 and 60 working days of receipt by your organisation?

(d) how many responses to FOI review requests were issued within 21 and 60 working days of receipt of the request for an internal review?

Answer

2.a – 158 out of 288 requests

2.b – 4 out of 10 requests

2.c -128 out of 288 requests

2.d – 6 out of 10 requests

Request 3

During the period 1st March to 30th October 2020, provide precise data if available e.g., 15 out of 30 requests, and if not, provide an estimate e.g., 10%, for these questions:

(a) how many responses to FOI requests were issued more than 60 working days after receipt of the request?

(b) how many responses to FOI review requests were issued more than 60 working days after receipt of a request for an internal review?

Answer

3.a – 30 out of 856 requests

3.b – 1 out of 27 requests

Request 5

In relation to the FOI requests received by your organisation between 1st March and 30th October 2020, what proportion related directly to Covid-19, your organisation's Covid-19 response or impact of the pandemic on your organisation? (Provide precise data if available e.g., 15 out of 30 requests, and if not, provide an estimate e.g., 10%)

Answer

55 of the 776 requests received for this period were directly linked to the topic of Covid-19.

Request 6

On 17th July 2020 the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) launched a self-assessment Freedom of Information toolkit (FOI self-assessment toolkit | ICO) to help public authorities respond

to FOI requests as they prepared to recover from the coronavirus pandemic.

6.a - Does, or has your organisation ever, use/d the toolkit? If so, please explain whether it has had any positive outcomes.

6.b - If your organisation has not/does not make use of the toolkit, please explain why not.

Answer

6.a – No, PSNI has not used this specific toolkit although took account of it in the development of a PSNI specific Action Plan to assist with improving its compliance and eliminating its backlog of requests which was shared with the Information Commissioner’s Office.

6.b – As above, see 6.a.

Request 8

Has your organisation taken steps to proactively publish information relating to Covid-19, your organisation's Covid-19 response or the impact of the pandemic on your organisation? If it includes a dedicated webpage, please provide a link to the webpage.

Answer

The Police Service of Northern Ireland proactively published information relating to the organisation’s response to Covid-19 through media updates, our social channels and on the website. Media updates and posts on our social channels provided information on the police approach to NI Health Protection Regulations, advice for the public on how to adhere to the Health Protection Regulations, updates on number of reports to police about Health Protection Regulation breaches and updates on penalty notices and fines issued for breach of the Health Protection regulations. A web page on the PSNI website contained information on the police approach to Covid-19, advice to the public and updates on reports received and penalty notices and fines issued for breach of the Health Protection Regulations. This page has since been removed from the website as we move forward from the pandemic.

We also had a dedicated section on our intranet which provided officers and staff with up-date and accurate information regarding COVID-19. This was regularly updated.

You provided queries in relation to the following Requests from F-2022-00814

Re Request 4

I hope you will also consider providing a response to question 4 if I clarify that what I have in mind is: In your /your team's experience as the central point of contact for FOI requests (as opposed to colleagues throughout the PSNI whom you might have sought information from), which, if any of the reasons for delay were applicable e.g. if you/your team had limited access to necessary systems for the first month of the pandemic? I'm not expecting you to consider the reason for delay for each request that you processed. Rather, I'm seeking to understand in general terms which factors explain delay.

Answer

You are asking PSNI to express opinion as opposed to providing “recorded information” as defined under Section 84 of FOI Act.

Re Request 7

As for question 7, I'd like to clarify that what I have in mind is whether for example the PSNI decided to proactively publish more information in response to Covid, and if you/your team was asked to assist in that response, or whether FOI was deprioritised so that staff could be redeployed

Answer

PSNI provided an explanation in relation to this request in our response to F-2022-00814.

Specifically:

In relation to Request 7 to provide an answer to this question we would have to do a manual trawl of media release records, social media posts, printed material for the time frame of the Covid-19 pandemic. To accurately assess if we had published more information we would have to do a similar trawl of information released in the few years prior to provide a factual assessment.

To trawl our social media posts alone, it is estimated it would take four hours to trawl two years' worth of social posts on one of our social channels. We have 17 Facebook pages, 20 Twitter accounts, one Instagram feed, one LinkedIn channel and 11 Nextdoor districts so to cover all of these would take 200 hours

Please note: PSNI can confirm that FOI was not deprioritised and no member of the FOI team was redeployed at any stage

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 remain dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you may make a complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office, under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, 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', or use the ICO self-service portal available at www.ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/officialinformation-concerns-report/official-information-concern/

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 their 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.