

Keeping People Safe



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2022-01311

Keyword: Operational Policing

Subject: Family Liaison Officers (FLOs)

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 (PSNI) does hold some information to which your request relates and this is being provided to you. In relation to Request 7 the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) is providing a Neither Confirm Nor Deny (NCND) response by virtue of Section 40 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and are neither confirming nor denying whether we do or do not hold the information you seek. We will explain how the exemptions we are relying upon in our response below.

Request 1

Number of current Family Liaison Officers (FLO) working in your Force?

Answer

A total of 114 police officers within PSNI are trained as Family Liaison Officers (FLOs).

Please note; *FLO's are not all active at the same time, and can decide to take a break from the role as required.*

Request 2

Number of FLO's who are sworn officers or police staff?

Answer

PSNI only use Police Officers to perform the role of a FLO.

Request 3

Number of male and female FLO's in your Force?

Answer

PSNI can advise currently there are a total of 72 female FLOs and a total of 42 male FLOs.

Request 4

Number of years' experience in policing for each FLO? (i.e. 0-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years, 16 years plus)

Answer

Please see the response provided in the table below:

Number of Years' Experience in Policing	Number of FLOs
0 – 5 Years	27
6 – 10 Years	15
11 – 15 Years	33
16+ Years	39

Request 5

Years of experience as an FLO for each FLO? (i.e., 0-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years, 16 years plus)

Clarification Sent To Requester;

In regards to Request 5; Can you confirm what you define as 'Experience' For example length of service or a certain qualification etc.?

Clarification Received From Requester;

I simply mean years of working as a FLO.

Answer 5

Please see the response provided in the table below:

Years of Experience – (Based on the First Date of Training)	Number of FLOs
0-5 Years	60
6-10 Years	17
11-15 Years	11
16 Years Plus	4
No Training Record to Determine Length of Experience	22

Please note in conjunction with the information the following caveats:

(i) The information is based on the first date of training.

(ii) FLOs are not all active at the same time and may have taken a break from performing the role for a period of time.

Request 6

What numbers of FLO's are in each department or section of your Force? (e.g., MIT, HMET, DA).

Answer

Please see the response provided in the table below:

Department	Number of FLOs
Belfast Area	7
Command & District Policing Command	4
Crime Operations	40
Derry City and Strabane Area	9
Justice Department	9
North Area	13
People and Organisational Development	2
Operational Support	3
South Area	27

Request 7

Number of FLO's in your Force absent from work due to mental health problems from between April 2020 to March 2022?

Answer

In accordance with the Act, this letter represents a Refusal Notice for this particular request. The Police Service of Northern Ireland can Neither Confirm Nor Deny (NCND) that it holds the information you have requested.

Section 1 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) places two duties on public authorities. Unless exemptions apply, the first duty at Section 1(1)(a) is to confirm or deny whether the information specified in the request is held. The second duty at Section 1(1)(b) is to disclose information that has been confirmed as being held.

Where exemptions are relied upon Section 17(1) of FOIA requires that we provide the applicant with a notice which

- a) states that fact,
- b) specifies the exemption(s) in question and
- c) states (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) can Neither Confirm Nor Deny that it holds the information relevant to your request as the duty in Section 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 does not apply by virtue of the following exemptions:

Section 40 (5B)(a)(i) – Personal Information - The duty to confirm or deny does not arise if to do so would contravene any of the data protection principles.

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

'Neither Confirm nor Deny' (NCND)

There may be occasions when complying with the duty to confirm or deny under section 1(1) (a) would in itself disclose sensitive or potentially damaging information that falls under an exemption. In these circumstances, the Act allows a public authority to respond by refusing to confirm or deny whether it holds the requested information.

The decision to issue a 'neither confirm nor deny' response is not affected by whether we do or do not hold the information but relates to the consequences of confirming or denying the information is held. The starting point and main focus in most cases will be theoretical considerations about the consequences of confirming or denying that a particular type of information is held. The decision to neither confirm nor deny is separate from a decision not to disclose information and needs to be taken entirely on its own merits.

PSNI follow the Information Commissioner's Guidance in relation to 'NCND' and you may find it helpful to refer to this at the following link:

https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/1166/when_to_refuse_to_confirm_or_deny_section_1_foia.pdf

Section 40 is a Class-based exemption, therefore it is not necessary to evidence the harm caused by disclosure nor is it necessary to carry out a public interest test in this case.

Exemptions Explained

Section 40(5B)(a)(i) - Personal Information

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 by 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.

To confirm or deny that PSNI hold or do not hold information would in fact confirm information about an individual. This would amount to a release into the public domain and may identify personal information about an individual and would be likely to cause distress. The individual would have no expectation that these details would be released into the public domain; therefore PSNI would breach its data protection obligations and be unfair to individuals.

Request 8

Details of how FLO's are recruited in your Force.

Answer

Police Officers have to apply to be an FLO, and must have the support of their line management.

Request 9

Details of any training courses for FLO's provided by your Force.

Answer

All FLO training courses are delivered internally by qualified trainers and family liaison coordinators.

Request 10

Details of any support currently available to FLO's in your Force.

Answer 1

FLOs are supported during the deployment by a Family Liaison Coordinator and the Senior Investigating Officer; however they can also avail of the full range of wellbeing support that is available to all PSNI officers.

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.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.