

Keeping People Safe



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2022-01396

Keyword: Operational Policing

Subject: 999 and 101 Calls (2016)

Request and Answer:

Your request for information below has now been considered. In respect of Section 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) we can confirm that the Police Service of Northern Ireland does hold the information you have requested however it is estimated that the cost of complying with your request for information would exceed the “appropriate costs limit” under Section 12(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

As a part of your request you have asked us to consider various funding options in terms of providing this information to you. As per our Service Instruction available at the following link on PSNI’s website we state:

“It is not PSNI policy to charge for any disbursements when responding to FOI requests as permitted by the legislation. In limited circumstances a fee can be charged, if the PSNI elect to make information available which would otherwise be over cost to provide (see guidance above on section 12 and ‘Fees that may be charged where the cost of compliance exceeds the appropriate limit’) The requester can pay for the full cost of processing a request which would be over £450. To do this a fees notice would be required to be issued to the requester.”

<https://www.psni.police.uk/globalassets/advice--information/our-publications/policies-and-service-procedures/freedom-of-information-021019.pdf>

We have however contacted the relevant business and they have confirmed they are not able to provide this resource at a charge.

In terms of your request we therefore consider as above section 12 (1) of the FOIA applies. We have explained to you below that when PSNI estimates whether the appropriate limit is likely to be exceeded, it can include the costs of complying with two or more requests if certain conditions are met. In this case those conditions are met and complying with all of your requests would in our estimation exceed that appropriate limit set out in Regulation. We have explained this further below but also we followed the Information Commissioner’s Office guidance ‘Requests where the cost of compliance exceeds the appropriate limit’ in relation to this request, which also provides further detail on the application of section 12 (1) of the FOIA. This guidance is available on the ICO website at the following link:

<https://ico.org.uk/media/for->

You requested the following information from PSNI:

Request 1

Refined request:

We would like to request 999 and 101 call handling in Northern Ireland in 2016. Additionally, for each call we would like information on the response, specifically the C&C incident type.

We would like to use this data in a spatial and temporal analysis, and therefore which to have information on the address from which the call was made (or the address provided by the caller) and the date of the call. If gaining this information at the address-level is challenging for privacy reasons, then having it at the postcode level, Small Area, or Small Output Area would suffice.

Depending on the format in which the data are stored, we imagine a data sheet with the following four columns: date, location, call type (999 or 101), C&C incident type (emergency, priority, scheduled, or early resolution). This data sheet would consist of 715,830 rows.

We understand that this is still a large request. If it still exceeds appropriate costs, then it would suffice to restrict our request to 999 calls (173,690). However, our preference is for both 999 and 101 call data.

Funding options for initial request:

We understand that the initial request was flawed because the 101-call number was only introduced in 2014. However, we are still interested in the call data for the 1998-2021 period (999 calls for the entire period and 101-calls for 2014-2021). Therefore, we would like to know what options exist for us to fund the location, retrieval, and extraction of this data. The Information Commissioner's Office website states that authorities can charge for a request, although these 'disbursements' appear to be limited in nature. We potentially have sufficient research budgets for this type of activity if it were an option.

Again, thank you for an incredibly helpful and insightful response to our initial request. We are hopeful that our refined request will be possible and hope to find out more about potentially funding our initial request.

Answer

Section 17(5) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Police Service of Northern Ireland, when refusing to provide such information (because the cost of compliance exceeds the appropriate limit) to provide you the applicant with a notice which states that fact.

It is estimated that the cost of complying with your request for information would exceed the "appropriate costs limit" under Section 12(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Section 12 of FOIA allows a public authority to refuse to deal with a request where it estimates that it would exceed the appropriate limit to either comply with the request in its entirety or confirm or deny whether the requested information is held. The estimate must be reasonable in the circumstances of the case. The 'appropriate limit' is currently £600 for central government and £450 for all other public authorities including PSNI. The relevant Regulations which define the appropriate limit for section 12 purposes are The Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulation 2004 SI 2004 No 3244. These are known as the 'Fees Regulations' for brevity.

Regulation 4(3) of the Fees Regulations states that a public authority can take into account the costs it reasonably expects to incur in carrying out the following permitted activities in complying with the request:

- (i) determining whether the information is held;
- (ii) locating the information, or a document containing it;
- (iii) retrieving the information, or a document containing it; and

(iv) extracting the information from a document containing it.

Under those regulations PSNI can calculate the time spent on each of these permitted activities at £25 per hour (thus if the activity(s) takes more than 18 hours PSNI will be in excess of the 'appropriate limit').

When a public authority is estimating whether the appropriate limit is likely to be exceeded, it can include the costs of complying with two or more requests if the conditions laid out in Regulation 5 of the Fees Regulations can be satisfied. Those conditions require the requests to be:

- made by one person, or by different persons who appear to the public authority to be acting in concert or in pursuance of a campaign;
- made for the same or similar information; and
- received by the public authority within any period of 60 consecutive working days.

Regulation 5(2) of the Fees Regulations requires that the requests which are to be aggregated relate *"to any extent"* to the same or similar information. This is quite a wide test but public authorities should still ensure that the requests meet this requirement.

Enquiries made in relation to your request have identified that retrieval of this information would exceed the 18 hour cost limit set under the FOI Act by the Secretary of State.

In response to your Request above, the information requested is not held in a readily retrievable format on PSNI's Command & Control system and a manual trawl of records would be required. The relevant business area has advised there is hundreds of thousands reports made to Police, and each of these reports would have to be manually reviewed in an attempt to retrieve the desired information. Therefore, the retrieval process would hugely exceed the 18 hour cost limit.

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this letter should be considered as a Refusal Notice, and the request has therefore been closed.

Advice and Assistance

Under Section 16 of the FOIA PSNI will always try to assist you to refine your request and provide advice where we can. PSNI have considered how your request may be refined to bring it under the appropriate limit and we have also considered if this could be provided at a charge (as above). Unfortunately, as a manual trawl of records would be required for retrieval of any relevant information, it is not possible to offer any refinement.

However, we can advise there may be information on our website that may assist with your academic research within – "Outcomes of Crime recorded by Police Northern Ireland from 2015/2016 to 2020/2021".

For your convenience we have provided the link to the publication below.

[Trends in Police Crime Outcomes in Northern Ireland 2015/16 to 2020/21 \(psni.police.uk\)](https://psni.police.uk)

If you have any queries regarding your request or this 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.