



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2022-01445

Keyword: Crime

Subject: Knife Crime

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 (PSNI) 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. 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-organisations/documents/1199/costs_of_compliance_exceeds_appropriate_limit.pdf

Request 1

I am writing to request data recorded in relation to knife crime which I believe is in the public interest after a series of knife crime offences have taken place across the UK in recent months.

With all requests outlined below, please provide a total number although any details which doesn’t disclose personal information, such as details on the type of offence would be appreciated.

How many people have been arrested for knife crime for the following years:

- May 2019- May 2020
- May 2020- May 2021
- May 2021 – May 2022

Request 2

How many people have been charged through a knife crime for the following years:

- May 2019- May 2020
- May 2020- May 2021
- May 2021 – May 2022

Request 3

How many victims of knife crime has been recorded in your region for the years:

- May 2019- May 2020
- May 2020- May 2021
- May 2021 – May 2022

Request 4

How many victims under the age of 16 have been recorded by your force for the years:

- May 2019- May 2020
- May 2020- May 2021
- May 2021 – May 2022

Request 5

Can you specify how many minors under the age of 16 have been arrested for knife crime? Can you give a break down by age and sex?

- May 2019- May 2020
- May 2020- May 2021
- May 2021 – May 2022

Request 6

Can you specify how many minors under the age of 16 have been charged for knife crime for the years:

- May 2019- May 2020
- May 2020- May 2021
- May 2021 – May 2022

Answers

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').

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. The information requested whilst held electronically on PSNI's database, is not held centrally in a searchable format.

PSNI can advise in relation to requests 1, 2, 5, and 6, while the information you have requested is held on the custody record of each person, it is not held in a retrievable format that provides the information without manual intervention, and a comprehensive search would need to be conducted to retrieve the information. The custody data extracts that PSNI use to produce the 'Knife and Sharp Instrument' statistics from the recorded crime data series do not contain weapon fields, the weapon information is recorded in a separate tab within the custody record. Therefore, each custody record would have to be manually examined to ascertain if the weapon involved in the incident which the arrest took place was a knife. PSNI have identified that each year approximately 25,000 individuals are processed through custody. Allowing ten minutes reviewing each individual person's record amounts to over 4,000 hours of work, grossly exceeding the legislative timescale of 18 hours.

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

You may wish to submit a refined request in order that the cost of complying with your request may be facilitated within the 'appropriate limit'. In compliance with Section 16 of the Act, we have considered how your request may be refined to bring it under the appropriate limit and can advise as follows:

- **Request 3** – PSNI can advise the recorded crime data series is updated quarterly with selected offences involving knife and sharp instrument. Please see below the link to the latest report which includes figures for the last five years to the end of March 2022. The next update to the end of June 2022 will be published in July 2022

[Police Recorded Crime Statistics](#)

- **Request 4** - PSNI can provide the number of victims of a selected knife and sharp instrument offence where the victim was aged Under 16 at the time of offence.

Please note; *To produce the knife and sharp instrument figures for recorded crime the records are selected which meet the criteria as determined by the Home Office (this includes specific offences such as Homicide, Attempted murder, Grievous Body Harm and Assault Occasioning Actual Body Harm, Threats to Kill, Robbery and rape and sexual assaults) and also what weapons constitutes a sharp instrument, where a sharp instrument is any object that pierces the skin (or in the case of a threat is capable of piercing the skin) (e.g. a broken bottle). Additionally, the knife and sharp instruments figures are victim based.*

Submission of a refined request would be treated as a new request, and considered in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, including consideration of relevant Part II exemptions.

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.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.