



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2021-01483

Keyword: Human Resources

Subject: Police Officers - Covid19 And Or Related Variants

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 1

Under the freedom of information Act I would like to ask the following questions in relation to the PSNI and their response to police officers suffering from the Covid19 virus and or related variants. Does the PSNI currently have policies and procedures in place to assist officers suffering from long covid19 and related variants?

Answer

No. At present there is no current policy /procedures specific to Long COVID-19 or related variants,. Advice and guidance can be accessed via the OHW Wellbeing pages on the Police Service of Northern Ireland's intranet.

Request 2

If a police officer has been diagnosed with long covid is it recorded as sick leave? Or is it recorded as special leave?

Answer

If an individual receives a confirmed positive test result for Covid 19 then the absence must be recorded as a period of sick leave. If an individual is suffering mild symptoms consistent with Covid 19 and has received a negative result they can avail of self-isolation special leave for up to 10 days. If an individual has severe symptoms consistent with Covid (and are of such severity that under normal circumstances they would not have attended duty) then this period must be recorded as sick absence even if they have received a negative result. A Police Officer diagnosed with long covid will be recorded as sick absence and not as special leave.

Request 3

In regards to probation officers, if a probation police officer has been diagnosed with long covid and or has been on sick leave due to a covid19 condition, will their probation period be extended?

Answer

Yes, this is in line with all other forms of absence. In relation to a medical illness, there is no distinction made as to the specific illness.

Request 4

If a probation officer has had their probation period extended despite having suffered from long covid, how long will the probation period be extended by?

Answer

This will be extended on a pro-rotta basis. This is in line with all other forms of absence. No distinction is made as to the type of illness.

Request 5

If a probation officer has been diagnosed with long covid, and they return to work on light duties will that period on light duties result in their probation period being extended and if so for how long for?

Answer

Where a Probationer Constable is at work but in a non-operational role or has long term absence of more than 3 months then the probation period will be extended on a pro-rata basis. This is to enable the Probationer Constable to demonstrate that they have the capacity to become a fully effective and efficient Police Officer. Probation will normally be 2 years and the number of extensions to probation should not exceed 2 unless there are exceptional circumstances. Irrespective of the reason for the absence, the Probationer Management Guidance would be applied as set out above. Long Covid may fall within the term 'exceptional circumstances'.

Request 6

Has the PSNI got a policy in regards to long covid absences specifically for probationer officers?

Answer

No.

Request 7

In regards to part-time police officers, if a POPT is diagnosed with long covid, can they be facilitated with light duties if they are physically unable to complete their normal duties?

Answer

Part Time Reserve Officer (PTR) deployment would be reviewed on a case by case basis and reasonable steps would be taken to provide deployment options commensurate with the role of a PTR

Please note

PTR officers are not known as POPT, but as Part Time Reserve.

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.psnj.police.uk

Personal details in respect of your request have, where applicable, been removed to protect confidentiality.