



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2022-01542

Keyword: Crime

Subject: Under 18 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

How many under 18 boys in the following years – 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 - have been arrested on suspicion of carrying a knife/bladed article?

Request 2

How many under 18 girls in the following years – 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 - have been arrested on suspicion of carrying a knife/bladed article?

Request 3

How many under 18 boys in the following years – 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 - have been charged with GBH/ABH where a knife/bladed article was used?

Request 4

How many under 18 girls in the following years – 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 - have been charged with GBH/ABH where a knife/bladed article was used?

Request 5

How many under 18 boys in the following years – 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 - have been

convicted of GBH/ABH where a knife/bladed article was used?

Request 6

How many under 18 girls in the following years – 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 - have been convicted of GBH/ABH where a knife/bladed article was used?

Request 7

How many under 18 boys in the following years – 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 - have been charged with murder where the cause of death was an attack involving a knife/bladed article?

Request 8

How many under 18 girls in the following years – 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 - have been charged with murder where the cause of death was an attack involving a knife/bladed article?

Request 9

How many under 18 boys in the following years – 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 - have been convicted of murder after an attack involving a knife/bladed article?

Request 10

How many under 18 girls in the following years – 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 - have been convicted of murder after an attack involving a knife/bladed article?

If possible could I have this information in an email in a column format. Please could you also include the age of the alleged offender where possible.

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’).

PSNI can advise that 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. This information 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 you have requested in relation to Request 3 and 4. There is no offence code for an assault involving a knife/bladed article on the database or means of identifying if a knife/bladed article was used in an offence without manual intervention of the database. Therefore to identify if an occurrence met the criteria of this Request a manual trawl of all custody charges in relation to Grievous Bodily Harm (GBH) and Actual Bodily Harm (ABH) would be required. In order to quantify the figures involved, there are approximately 160 custody records where a person under 18 was arrested and subsequently charged. Allowing 10 minutes to review each individual occurrence to determine whether the circumstances relate to your Request amounts to approximately 27 hours of work, thus 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

Under Section 16 of the FOIA, PSNI will always try to assist you to refine your request and provide advice where we can. We can advise that we would be able to provide the following information:

- The number of custody records for males and females under 18, that were arrested and processed through custody in the following years – 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 –for an offence of ‘Possessing article with blade or point in public place’ or an offence of ‘Possessing article with blade or point on school premises’, including provision of the age of the individual arrested.
- The number of custody records where a person under 18 has been charged with Grievous Bodily Harm/Actual Bodily Harm and where the custody record (which will deal with the same person) also contains an arrest for ‘Possessing article with blade or point in public place’ or an offence of ‘Possessing article with blade or point on school premises’ in the following years – 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022.

Please note that information regarding murder for Requests 7 – 10 would be exempt by virtue of Section 38, Health & Safety. Families of the deceased have a right to grieve for the loss of their loved ones without interference. Disclosure may result in bringing unnecessary and unwanted attention to the families, perhaps via the media or other interested parties. It would stand to reason that it would be inappropriate to release information which may have a detrimental effect on the mental well-being of those impacted.

For information, convictions data falls within the remit of Department of Justice (Analytical Services Group). They may be best placed to respond to this aspect of your Request.

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 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.psnipolice.uk

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