



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2022-01615

Keyword: Organisational Information/Governance

Subject: Belfast Domestic & Sexual Violence Partnership

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 does hold some information to which your request relates and this is being provided to you.

General Request

I write in relation to PSNI's role as a member of the Belfast Domestic & Sexual Violence Partnership (The Partnership). My understanding is that The Partnership's aims are to work to improve services for all adults and children experiencing domestic & sexual violence and abuse.

Please advise me of the following:

Request Number 1

Why is The Partnership based in a building that is a safe space strictly for women only?

Request Number 2

Why is The Partnership's Co-ordinator based in a building that is a safe space strictly for women only?

Request Number 3

What risk management assessment has been conducted to determine the appropriateness of these arrangements?

Answers 1- 3

Enquiries made in relation to these aspects of your request failed to locate any relevant records or documents based on the information you have provided.

Accordingly, we have determined that the Police Service of Northern Ireland does not hold this information to which you seek access.

However to assist under 'Section 16' and outside of the FOI Act 'we can advise that the Partnership is not a service, it is a cohort of voluntary, community and statutory agencies who come together to consider how we can collectively work together to strengthen safety and protection for **all** victims of domestic and sexual violence'.

Request Number 4

How do PSNI justify the decision to agree that responsibility for the day to day line management of The Partnership Co-ordinator should be supervised by Women's Aid Belfast & Lisburn? (*1)

Answer

The Freedom of Information Act requires PSNI to provide a response to a request for 'recorded' information which is held (s.1 FOIA). A question will not necessarily constitute a 'valid request'. Further information on what constitutes a valid request can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office website:

<https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/1164/recognising-a-request-made-under-the-foia.pdf>

The FOI Act therefore does not require PSNI to speculate or provide a response to requests which are not seeking recorded information and the information to which you seek access in relation to Request 4 is not deemed to be seeking recorded information, rather it is considered to be asking for an opinion. Subsequently it is not considered to be a valid request under Section 8 of the FOIA.

A public authority is under no obligation to provide general explanations or justifications.

Request Number 5

Who funds The Partnership's Co-ordinator Role recruited by public advertisement in 2021?

Answer

Enquiries made in relation to this aspect of your request failed to locate any relevant records or documents based on the information you have provided.

Accordingly, we have determined that the Police Service of Northern Ireland does not hold this information to which you seek access.

Request Number 6

How did members of The Partnership justify the direct sex discrimination criteria applied in relation to this Co-ordinator Role?

Answer

The Freedom of Information Act requires PSNI to provide a response to a request for 'recorded' information which is held (s.1 FOIA). A question will not necessarily constitute a 'valid request'. Further information on what constitutes a valid request can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office website:

<https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/1164/recognising-a-request-made-under-the-foia.pdf>

The FOI Act therefore does not require PSNI to speculate or provide a response to requests which are not seeking recorded information and the information to which you seek access in relation to Request 6 is not deemed to be seeking recorded information, rather it is considered to be asking for an opinion. Subsequently it is not considered to be a valid request under Section 8 of the FOIA. A public authority is under no obligation to provide general explanations or justifications.

However to assist under 'Section 16' and outside of the FOI Act 'we can advise that we are aware that the co-ordinator role is employed by Women's Aid but this is not information that the PSNI or any of the other members of the partnership would officially hold. Therefore, the partnership is not the employer of this role so under Section 8 of the FOIA none of the other members of the partnership including PSNI are obligated to answer this aspect of your request.

Request Number 7

What advice have members of The Partnership requested or received from the Equality Commission

NI in relation to recruitment and the application of genuine occupational requirements (GOQ's)?

Request Number 8

What role do the PSNI play in recruitment for roles working on behalf of The Partnership?

Answers 7 and 8

Enquiries made in relation to these aspects of your request failed to locate any relevant records or documents based on the information you have provided.

The Partnership is not a service, and all working roles of the Partnership are occupied by staff members of various voluntary, community and statutory agencies therefore **PSNI would not play any role in recruiting for roles working specifically on behalf of the Partnership.**

Based on this information any advice that may have been sought from the Equality Commission in relation to the partnership Co-ordinator role will have been conducted by the Partnership member who directly employs this person.

PSNI would not hold any recorded information that would answer these aspects of your request.

Request Number 9

Are the PSNI members of any of the other four Regional Domestic & Sexual Violence Partnerships?

Answer

Yes, PSNI can confirm that we are members of the other four Regional Domestic & Sexual Violence Partnerships in Northern Ireland.

Request Number 10

Are the PSNI aware of any similar examples of directly discriminatory practices that may impact on any of the Regional Partnership's ability to create inclusive, collaborative multi-agency partnership working environments best equipped to generate positive action to eliminate abuse experienced across all Section 75 Groups? If so how are they justified?

Answer

PSNI can advise that under Section 8 (1)(c) of FOIA, Request Number 10 does not constitute a valid request as it is not adequately describing information sought.

Therefore, this request is also refused under S. 84 of the Act as this is not a request for recorded information and thus rather for PSNI to speculate on what, when and where *they believe* there may be other potential impacts and how such processes could be justified.

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 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.