

Keeping People Safe



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2021-01676

Keyword: Organisational Information/Governance

Subject: Police Cells Used As A Place Of Safety

Request and Answer:

Request

Please could you tell me how many times police cells were used as a 'place of safety' for adult patients sections under the mental health act for each month between (and including) January 2017 and June 2021?

For each month, please could you tell me both the average amount of time and the maximum amount of time that individual patients were kept in police cells?

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 not hold information in relation to your requests. Enquiries made in relation to your request failed to locate any records or documents relevant to your request based on the information you have provided.

PSNI does not hold any specific data that accurately reflects when a PSNI cell within a custody suite has been used purely as a "place of safety", if and when someone has been detained under the Mental Health (NI) Order 1986. PSNI have made it known that there may be circumstances when an individual is detained for alleged criminal activity and detained in a PSNI cell. They may in turn have mental health issues but this would not be the reason specifically for their detention. In essence the occupation of a cell would not then be deemed to be utilised as a "place of safety". Generally when this terminology is used it refers to a "PoS" awaiting psychiatric bed allocation. It is the policy of the PSNI not to detain individuals in these circumstances in cells but to convey the individual directly to hospital to best cater for their needs and treatment.

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

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.psnipolice.uk

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