

Keeping People Safe



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2020-02016

Keyword: Human Resources

Subject: Inspector Exam (Covid 19)

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 information to which your request relates. The decision has been taken to disclose the following.

Request 1

In advance of next month's inspector legal exam can I request under FOI- measures to negate risks:

All risk assessments completed to ensure COVID compliance- including where possible sterilisation of desks etc., no one touching exam papers for 3 days in advance of candidates (as schools do with school work), if candidates will be assessed in 'bubbles'.

Answer

Please see attached the Risk Assessment and the details communicated to candidates via email are detailed below:

As you will be aware the corporate position in terms of 3 key Covid-19 self-checks have been put in place in recent days, and are notified to you when logging onto the system. By attending the examination site you are self-declaring you have assessed yourself against these 3 criteria detailed below and are confirming your suitability to attend.

- You are not suffering from a high temperature, a new continuous cough, or a loss of taste or smell.
- No one in your household is suffering from a high temperature, a new continuous cough, or a loss of taste or smell.
- You have read the guidance on POINT in relation to working safely during Covid-19.

The additional measures which will be in place for the examinations have now also been finalised and are detailed below and will be strictly adhered to:

1. No one who has one of the main symptoms of COVID-19 (new continuous cough, high temperature or loss of sense of smell or taste); who has tested positive for

- COVID-19; been told to self-isolate or is awaiting the result of a test should attend the examination;
2. All candidates must wear a 'Fluid Repellent Surgical Mask' or appropriate Face Covering from when they arrive at the examination site. Candidates may remove them during the exam and must put them back on when finished the exam and must wear masks until leaving the examination site;
 3. Please note that if any candidate has a medical exemption (as defined within the regulations) from wearing a mask they must advise Internal Promotion sufficiently in advance of the examination date. Candidates will be asked to provide supporting evidence of their medical exemption;
 4. All candidates should follow the Public Health Executive (PHE) guidelines at all times including regular hand washing; social distancing etc.
 5. There will be a 1 way system in place – please follow the signage and the instructions given by invigilators on the day.
 6. Candidates will be assigned a desk upon arrival and you must only sit at that specific desk, for track and trace purposes.
 7. There will be a 'zero tolerance' approach to breaches of the safety provisions pertaining to the examination centres and in respect of any inappropriate conduct towards staff working at the centres.
 8. The examination room will be cleaned before, between and after sessions.
 9. Candidates will be provided with sanitised stationery and will be asked to place this stationery in boxes provided when leaving the examination room

Request 2

Evidence supporting decision to risk lives:

I see in media that “operational need” has meant the risks have to be taken. And the exam needs to go ahead.

I would kindly request copy of all data, minutes of meetings e-mails etc. detailing all the concerns about the absence of inspectors /potential negative consequences of not running this exam which is driving the agenda for this exam to be undertaken amid a pandemic.

Answer

Please see the details requested in the table below which was an action from the Service Executive Team meeting :

04/11/2020	20~142	Inspectors Examination - Following update from Director of Human Resources (DoHR) it was agreed that the Inspectors Examination process would proceed. Appropriate processes and assessments in place to be reviewed again. Updated figures on number of candidates and withdrawal rates to be circulated.	Yvonne Cooke	Update 4/11/20 - DoHR noted and will progress. Pended to SET on 6/11/20. Update 5/11/20 - Requested information circulated - further update being provided at Service Executive Team (SET) on 6/11/20. Update 6/11/20 - Further update provided by DoHR and agreed examination would proceed. No SET required to attend.	Closed
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Please note that there are no other minutes or emails held in relation to this question.

Request 3

Are there alternatives:

Detail any other processes whereby inspectors can be appointed on a temporary basis which negates the requirement for law exam.

Answer

The 'temporary' promotion process.

Request 4

Safety measures:

All arrangements which have been put in place to protect high risk/ vulnerable persons to undertake

exams. Who will be ultimately responsible should people die:

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 questions which are not seeking recorded information. In this case PSNI does not hold information based on your question seeking measures of public confidence. However we can confirm PSNI discharged its responsibilities and developed a safe system of work as required by the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978 and based upon current available guidance relating to coronavirus and high risk candidates may request specific arrangements.

Request 5

Please confirm who is the highest ranking officer within PSNI who has been agreeable to this exam continuing in Nov 2020, when QUB have cancelled all their lectures (which were socially distanced),

If you refuse to give name please provide rank. Regards this individual please provide minutes of the decision making forum he/she attended to make the decision.

Answer

This was agreed by the PSNI's Chief Constable.

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.psni.police.uk

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