

Keeping People Safe



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2020-00718

Keyword: Organisational Information/Governance

Subject: Definition Of The Word "File" And "Material"

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

Could please supply a PSNI definition of 1/the word file 2/the word material 3/how many pieces of material constitute a file?

Clarification to the requester:

Section(8)(1)(c) of the FOI Act requires that a request for information must adequately describe the information sought

You are asking the PSNI to provide a definition of words - namely file and material.

In order for the PSNI to process your request can you provide clarity on what information you actually seek

Clarification from the requester:

I am trying to understand what the PSNI mean when one of their officers uses the word file and material as different means of storage and process? I can get dictionary' definition myself I need PSNI to clarify the difference between processing material? Without processing a file? Is the material not kept in a file? Started when crime reference number is given?

Answer

It is possible that a PSNI Officer may utilise different terminology when in discussion with the public and could use interchangeable terms such as file, material, processing information and processes depending on their own understanding of PSNI processes and the topic of conversation. It is impossible to give further clarity on the comments of any individual Officer without being able to seek further information directly from any Officer who made them. Depending on the circumstances, a 'file' may refer to a Human Resources file kept on individual staff employed within the PSNI or 'file' may refer to a prosecution file submitted to the Public Prosecution Service.

The PSNI processes and stores information / material we receive in a number of ways and in compliance with Data Protection Act and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) legislation. The terminology 'file' is most likely a reference to a file that is prepared by officers relating to an offence and then submitted to the Public Prosecution Service (PPS). This file will contain information

that is required by the PPS to determine if an offence should proceed to Court. These files prepared for the PPS are given their own unique Court Folder reference number which is different to the crime reference number you refer to.

Not all crime reference numbers (Occurrences) will result in a file (Court Folder) being prepared. It is therefore possible for PSNI to process material for a number of Policing purposes without any 'file' being in existence.

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.