



# FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



**Request Number:** F-2021-01038

**Keyword:** Operational Policing

**Subject:** Stop And Searches In Belfast

**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**

Under FOI legislation, please provide me with the following information on stop and search figures for the year Jan - Dec 2020

- The number of stop and searches in Belfast, broken down by postcode (BT1 through to BT17).

[NOTE - If it is not possible to provide the figures on stop and searches in Belfast by postcode, please provide the figures by 'North Belfast', 'East Belfast', 'South Belfast' and 'West Belfast'.]

**Answer**

The postcode of the location of a stop and search is seldom recorded and so statistics cannot be sufficiently disaggregated by postcode. Instead figures have been provided for North, East, South and West Belfast, as requested.

Table 1 under outlines the number of persons stopped and searched/questioned in Belfast Policing District between 1st January 2020 and 31st December 2020.

**Table 1**

Location	Number Of persons stopped and searched / questioned
North Belfast	1,476
East Belfast	996
South Belfast	2,887
West Belfast	933

**Please note**

Stop and Search is an operational tool used to prevent, detect and investigate crime as well as to bring offenders to justice. Police officers have a legal power to stop and search members of the public in certain circumstances, from dealing with incidents of anti-social behaviour, to suspecting an

individual is carrying drugs, a weapon or stolen property through to countering terrorism. There are a range of legislative powers available to an officer to carry out this task, including the Police and Criminal Evidence Order (PACE), the Misuse of Drugs Act, the Terrorism Act and the Justice and Security (NI) Act. In most circumstances a police officer will need grounds to search an individual. Some stop and search powers (those under the Justice and Security Act) allow individuals to be searched without grounds, for example, to counter terrorism. Further advice and information regarding stop and search can be found here [https://www.psni.police.uk/advice\\_information/stop-and-search/](https://www.psni.police.uk/advice_information/stop-and-search/)

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](mailto: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](http://www.psni.police.uk)

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