

Keeping People Safe



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2021-01363

Keyword: Crime

Subject: Domestic Abuse-related Offences

Request and Answer:

Your request for information below has now been considered. In respect of Section 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) we can confirm that the Police Service of Northern Ireland does hold the information you have requested however it is estimated that the cost of complying with your request for information would exceed the “appropriate costs limit” under Section 12(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. We have explained to you below that when PSNI estimates whether the appropriate limit is likely to be exceeded, it can include the costs of complying with two or more requests if certain conditions are met. In this case those conditions are met and complying with all of your requests would in our estimation exceed that appropriate limit set out in Regulation. We have explained this further below but also we followed the Information Commissioner’s Office guidance *‘Requests where the cost of compliance exceeds the appropriate limit’* in relation to this request, which also provides further detail on the application of Section 12 (1) of the FOIA. This guidance is available on the ICO website at the following link:

https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/1199/costs_of_compliance_exceeds_appropriate_limit.pdf

You requested the following information from PSNI:

Request 1

I would like data on the total number of domestic abuse-related offences recorded by the force between 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020, broken down by the victim’s ethnicity.

The number and type of crime outcomes recorded for domestic-abuse related offences*, broken down by sex and ethnicity of the victim, and the nature of the offence – eg psychological, physical, sexual or emotional.

Please only include offences that have been assigned an outcome, and group them by the year the outcome was recorded rather than the year the crime took place.

Request 2

Of the cases that resulted in a charge or summons in part 1 of this request (by year the outcome was recorded), please provide a breakdown of the sex and ethnicity of the suspect, whilst retaining the breakdown of the sex and ethnicity of the victim

Request 3

The number of times a suspect was arrested in relation to a domestic abuse-related offence, broken down by the sex and ethnicity of the suspect and of the victim

Request 4

The number of women who sought a domestic abuse protection order, by ethnicity

Request 5

The number of women who were granted a domestic abuse protection order, by ethnicity

Request 6

The number of men who sought a domestic abuse protection order, by ethnicity

Request 7

The number of men who were granted a domestic abuse protection order, by ethnicity

Answers

Section 17(5) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Police Service of Northern Ireland, when refusing to provide such information (because the cost of compliance exceeds the appropriate limit) to provide you the applicant with a notice which states that fact.

It is estimated that the cost of complying with your request for information would exceed the "appropriate costs limit" under Section 12(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Section 12 of FOIA allows a public authority to refuse to deal with a request where it estimates that it would exceed the appropriate limit to either comply with the request in its entirety or confirm or deny whether the requested information is held. The estimate must be reasonable in the circumstances of the case. The 'appropriate limit' is currently £600 for central government and £450 for all other public authorities including PSNI. The relevant Regulations which define the appropriate limit for section 12 purposes are The Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulation 2004 SI 2004 No 3244. These are known as the 'Fees Regulations' for brevity.

Regulation 4(3) of the Fees Regulations states that a public authority can take into account the costs it reasonably expects to incur in carrying out the following permitted activities in complying with the request:

- (i) determining whether the information is held;
- (ii) locating the information, or a document containing it;
- (iii) retrieving the information, or a document containing it; and
- (iv) extracting the information from a document containing it.

Under those regulations PSNI can calculate the time spent on each of these permitted activities at £25 per hour (thus if the activity(s) takes more than 18 hours PSNI will be in excess of the 'appropriate limit').

When a public authority is estimating whether the appropriate limit is likely to be exceeded, it can include the costs of complying with two or more requests if the conditions laid out in Regulation 5 of the Fees Regulations can be satisfied. Those conditions require the requests to be:

- made by one person, or by different persons who appear to the public authority to be acting in concert or in pursuance of a campaign;
- made for the same or similar information; and
- received by the public authority within any period of 60 consecutive working days.

Regulation 5(2) of the Fees Regulations requires that the requests which are to be aggregated relate “to any extent” to the same or similar information. This is quite a wide test but public authorities should still ensure that the requests meet this requirement.

Enquiries made in relation to your request has identified that retrieval of information to respond to your request would exceed the FOI legislative cost of 18 hours as set by the Secretary of State. For Request number 2 there are approximately 20,000 records in the time period requested and whilst held electronically to identify the information request in particular regarding ‘suspects’ as this is not held in a format that does not require manual intervention. Even at a conservative 2 minutes per record this would be over 650 hours to provide the information requested.

With regard to Request number 3 - PSNI can advise that a person can be arrested, then subsequently de-arrested before they reach custody therefore a total figure would not be recorded.

Request numbers 4, 5, 6 and 7 – Domestic Abuse Protection Orders pertain to England and Wales and not Northern Ireland. In Northern Ireland we have Non-Molestation Orders (NMO) which may not be the equivalent. NMO’s whilst information may be electronically they are managed within the 11 PSNI Districts and to provide a breakdown by ethnicity and for the time scale requested would require a manual trawl placing this request number over the 18 hour cost limit

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this letter should be considered as a Refusal Notice, and the request has therefore been closed.

Advice and Assistance

Under Section 16 of the FOIA, PSNI will always try to assist you to refine your request and provide advice where we can. PSNI has considered how your request may be refined to bring it under the appropriate limit. PSNI can advise that subject to a new request:

- **Request 1** - PSNI can provide data for the number of domestic abuse motivated offences with an outcome assigned during the period 2016 – 2020, broken down by the gender and ethnicity of the victims. However, this will not include figures broken down by whether the offence was ‘psychological, physical, sexual or emotional’ as PSNI do not hold information for offences in this format.

Submission of a refined request would be treated as a new request, and considered in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, including consideration of relevant Part II exemptions.

If you have any queries regarding your request or this 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.psnj.police.uk

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