



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2020-01599

Keyword: Organisational Information/Governance

Subject: Procedure at Attendance of Suspected Suicide

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 and the decision has been taken to disclose the following.

Request 1

When the PSNI attends a sudden death such as a suspected suicide, how is next of kin of the deceased determined?

Answer

The Next of Kin of the deceased is determined in the following order of priority:

Spouse or partner, parent or child, brother or sister, grandparent or grandchild, step parent, half-brother/sister or longstanding friend.

Request 2

Please send me the details of any guidance/procedure the PSNI follow in order to establish next of kin?

Answer

The investigating officer will make all efforts to find and locate the deceased's Next of Kin from people spoken to or other information located at the scene or recorded on police systems.

In cases involving foreign nationals where this information is not readily available, PSNI will seek additional confirmation from the international system of data collection and recording which is used in accordance with *INTERPOL's Rules on the Processing of Data*, attached separately to this correspondence.

Request 3

When attending a suspected suicide, where there is a history of illegal drug use, do the police search the premises and if not, why not?

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' if it is

seeking a 'yes' or 'no' response unless it is already held in recorded information, if it is asking PSNI to speculate or if it seeks information which is not recorded.

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>

On this occasion, we can advise that there is no definitive answer to this question as every suspected suicide is different and based on the information Police have at that time will determine what course of action is taken. If Police are investigating a suspected suicide whereby illegal drugs are believed to have been the cause of death then a search of the premises will take place. However a search may not be warranted in respect of every suspected suicide such as a hanging.

Each investigation carried out by Police will be based on the information available to them at that time and this will determine their investigative strategies. In respect of most suspected suicides a search will be carried out for a suicide note if one is not immediately obvious but this would not constitute a search for illegal drugs. There are so many variables it is impossible to cover every eventuality. In relation to dealing with suspected suicides Police will follow relevant guidance.

Request 4

If Class A drugs are found with the owner's name and address on the package what steps should the PSNI follow to investigate that package?

Answer

If while Police were in attendance at a suspected suicide and they identified a package containing class A drugs, they would commence an investigation into identifying the supplier of the drugs. The drugs at the scene would be seized to allow further investigation to take place and to remove them out of circulation. The investigating officer would pursue all relevant lines of enquiry.

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.psnipolice.uk

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

confidentiality.