

Keeping People Safe



## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



**Request Number:** F-2020-01837

**Keyword:** Organisational Information/Governance

**Subject:** Domestic Abuse Training

### 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](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

How many police officers and police staff have undertaken training on domestic abuse cases in the last five financial years? (2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20).

#### Request 2

How many hours have police officers and police staff spent training on domestic abuse cases in the last five financial years? (2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20).

#### Request 3

How much money has been spent on training police officers and police staff on domestic abuse cases in the last five financial years? (2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20).

#### Request 4

How many Non-Molestation orders relating to domestic abuse were issued in the last five financial years? (2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20).

## Request 5

How many Non-Molestation orders relating to domestic abuse were breached in the last five financial years?

(2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20).

## 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 would exceed the 18 hour cost limit set under the FOI Act by the Secretary of State. All new police officers entering the PSNI will undertake the Student Officer Development Programme and it has been established that Domestic Abuse Training is integrated into a wide range of training topics within this programme. Training is also undertaken by Officers within the 11 Policing Districts and / or in specialist roles.

As an example in relation to ‘Request 2’ - domestic abuse training is delivered in an integrated way throughout lessons, practicals, hydra exercise and assessments in the Foundation Training

Programme for Student Officers. Specific records of domestic abuse training are not held separately from other course records and it would require a manual trawl through all records for the last five financial years to locate all course records. These records would then require further interrogation to establish all records relating to domestic abuse training cases in an attempt to estimate a time for delivery of the training. It is estimated that the retrieval process alone for Student Officers would exceed the 18 hour cost limit.

In addition in response to Request 3, which requests 'how much money has been spent on police officers and police staff training on domestic abuse cases for the last five financial years', whilst PSNI Police Officer Foundation Training has a budget it is not divided specifically by subject area or lesson plans nor does it have a specific cost code for these lesson plans and therefore cannot be extracted from the overall costs held for lessons within the College without manual intervention. To obtain the information requested would require a manual trawl of staff records and timetable records which is a complex process due to the structure of staff in Foundation Training, with over 100 inputs to work with. This would also require the 11 Policing Districts to provide the information which would further exceed the retrieval process and the 18 hour time period allowed for by FOI legislation.

In response to Request 4, there is no field in structured data where a non-molestation order (NMO) is recorded on the NICHE database. NMOs are usually attached to a 'Service of Documents' type occurrence as an external report. In addition, this does not specify the reason relating to why the NMO was granted (i.e. whether or not it relates to domestic abuse). In the time period requested, there have been a total of 24,760 'Service of Documents' occurrences recorded on Niche. Estimating a time of 5 minutes per occurrence to determine if the document in question is a NMO, and then finding out if it relates to domestic abuse, it would take approx. 2,063 hours to complete.

**Under Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, if any part of the request exceeds the cost threshold then the whole request will be excess costs and there is no obligation to answer any part of the request**

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 have considered how your request may be refined to bring it under the appropriate limit and PSNI can provide responses to your following requests:

- Request 1 – Information provided would be based on a standalone Domestic Abuse Course. **It should be noted that this response will not include any training which has not been captured on SAP computer system or any training that Student Officers receive.**
- Request 5 - This information is available on the PSNI website. For your convenience we have provided the links to the publications below.

Information for 2018/19 and 2019/20 is available in the spreadsheet accompanying our recent Domestic Abuse Quarterly Update to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 bulletin, in Table 1:

<https://www.psni.police.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/domestic-abuse-statistics/2019-20/q4/domestic-abuse-tables-mar-20.xls>

Figures for 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18 can be found in the spreadsheet accompanying the most recent Domestic Abuse Annual Trends 2004/05 – 2018/19 bulletin, in table 2.1:

<https://www.psni.police.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/domestic-abuse-statistics/2018-19/domestic-abuse-incidents-and-crimes-in-northern-ireland-2004-05-to-2018-19.xls>

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](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.psnipolice.uk](http://www.psnipolice.uk)

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