



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2020-01850

Keyword: Crime

Subject: Child Abduction and Kidnapping

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

Request 1

Could I please request the following for the time period to January 1st 2020 to September 30th 2020. All child abduction and kidnapping related calls received by your force.

Request 2

All recorded incidents of child abduction by a parent (category 13/1), and the duration of these incidents, and if harm occurred (please note if they are ongoing).

Request 3

The number of recorded individuals who were victims of child abduction by a parent

Request 4

All recorded incidents of child abduction by other persons (category 13/2) and the duration of these incidents, and if harm occurred (please note if they are ongoing).

Request 5

The number of recorded individuals who were victims of child abduction by other persons.

Request 6

All recorded incidents of the kidnapping of a person under the age of 18, with data for categories 36/1, 36/3, and 35/5.

Request 7

All recorded under 18 victims of kidnapping.

If it would be possible to receive the information requested in a table that shows date, type of crime (as per categories) if harm was caused and the duration, and a separate table for victims, that would be very helpful.

Answer

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 have identified that retrieval of all relevant information would exceed the 18 hour cost limit set under the FOI Act, by the Secretary of State.

In relation to Request 1, incoming phone calls are not categorised beyond being presented as 101 or 999. Retrieval of any relevant information would require review of each and every telephone call recording to establish the content. There are in the region of 2000+ telephone calls received every day. Estimating an average of approximately 5 minutes to listen to 1 call, it would take 166 hours to review 1 day of telephone calls alone, greatly exceeding the appropriate cost limit. This estimate would be further increased in relation to the requested time-frame, January 1st 2020 to September 30th 2020.

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 has considered how your request may be refined to bring it under the appropriate limit. Subject to any relevant exemptions, it may be possible to retrieve the following information within the appropriate cost limit:

Request 2

The number of crimes recorded for the offence of child abduction by parent, i.e. the number of victims.

Request 3

As above in Request 2.

Request 4

The number of crimes recorded for the offence of child abduction by other, i.e. the number of victims.

Request 5

As above in request 4.

Request 6

The number of crimes recorded for the offence of kidnapping where the victim is aged under 18 at time of offence, i.e. the number of victims.

Request 7

Provided in Request 6.

Dependent on the information retrieved, it may be possible to provide the date the offence was reported to police and the offence recorded, i.e. child abduction by parent, child abduction by other, kidnapping and false imprisonment. All information will be subject to any relevant exemptions.

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 exemptions at Part 2 of the FOIA.

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.