

Keeping People Safe



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2020-01857

Keyword: Organisational Information/Governance

Subject: Missing Persons

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

Information in relation to missing persons for the years 2004-2018, this is to include the scale of the phenomenon, authorities involved in the search for missing persons and legal regulations.

Answer

Please see the table below detailing Missing Person Reports for the period FY 2013/14 to FY 2018/19.

Please note: This information is recorded by PSNI in Financial years and the Niche database records for missing persons only commenced in 2013.

There is no guarantee of accuracy for the data for the period FY 2013/14 to FY 2015/16 as it has not been appropriately sanitised. Therefore, it is possible this data may include duplicates and inaccuracies.

Year	Missing Person Reports
FY 2018/19	10,761
FY 2017/18	11,999
FY 2016/17	12,821
FY 2015/16	12,443
FY 2014/15	11,764
FY 2013/14	10,247

The authorities referred to would constitute internal police authorities for certain tactics. The role of the Police in missing persons investigations is to protect life and deal with any offences that come to light. There is a responsibility on the police to ensure that the person is safe and well and has the

opportunity to disclose any relevant issues. This may be conducted by Police or other professionals, but the police must be confident that there is nothing untoward that has been missed.

The investigation of a missing person is based on the circumstances of the disappearance. Officers recording the initial report will record sufficient information to conduct a risk assessment and initiate a police response. There are varying degrees of risk and police action is guided by the known facts. The vulnerability of a missing person is a strong consideration in establishing the potential risk to the missing person. All persons under 18 years of age are included in the definition of vulnerable.

The methods employed and circulation of the missing person will depend upon the circumstances, in line with previous reports (where applicable), information held on databases and circumstances of the incident that led to the missing person being reported i.e. a hill walker or a child reported missing. Checks will be made with local hospitals, public transport networks and police establishments to determine whether or not the missing person is detained in custody, police officers will be briefed with a description and last known whereabouts, friends contacted if not already done so by relatives etc.

There are varying degrees of risk and police are guided accordingly. The degrees of risk are defined as:

Low Risk – no apparent threat/danger to the missing person or members of the public.

Medium Risk – the risk posed is likely to put the missing person in danger or threatens other members of the public.

High Risk – the risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing the missing person is in danger through their own vulnerability or mental state, or there are substantial grounds for believing that the public is in danger as a result of the missing person's mental state.

The Police response will be determined by the actions set out in the 'Police Action in Respect of Missing Persons' Service Procedure. This is a joint protocol which is out of date but is currently under review.

The following links may provide information to assist your request:

<https://www.psni.police.uk/know-what-to-do-landing/if-a-person-is-missing/>

<http://www.hscboard.hscni.net/download/PUBLICATIONS/policies-protocols-and-guidelines/Missing-Children-Protocol-June-2015.pdf>

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.