

Keeping People Safe



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2020-01979

Keyword: Operational Policing

Subject: Missing Adults and Missing Children Mental Health and Suicide

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:

Missing adults and missing children mental health and suicide 2020

March 2020 – September 2020

Request 1

How many missing adults/children incidents were recorded as high, medium and low risk in each month from March 2020 to September 2020?

Request 2

Of the high risk cases, in each month what number of the missing incidents were reported from:

- Home
- Hospital
- Care settings
- Other (please provide a list of the other types of locations recorded)

Request 3

In what number of incidents was a suicide marker recorded in each month?

Please provide these figures broken down by gender

Please provide these figures broken down by risk assessment level

Request 4

In what number of incidents was a self-harm marker recorded in each month?

Please provide these figures broken down by gender

Please provide these figures broken down by risk assessment level

Request 5

What outcomes were recorded in each month at the point of case closure (for example, found safe and well, found deceased, experienced harm, etc.?)

March 2019 – September 2019

Request 6

How many missing adults/children incidents were recorded as high, medium and low risk in each month from March 2019 to September 2019?

Request 7

Of the high risk cases, in each month what number of the missing incidents were reported from:

- Home
- Hospital
- Care settings
- Other (please provide a list of the other types of locations recorded)

Request 8

In what number of incidents was a suicide marker recorded in each month?

a. Please provide these figures broken down by gender

b. Please provide these figures broken down by risk assessment level

Request 9

In what number of incidents was a self-harm marker recorded in each month?

a. Please provide these figures broken down by gender

b. Please provide these figures broken down by risk assessment level

Request 10

What outcomes were recorded in each month at the point of case closure (for example, found safe and well, found deceased, experienced harm, etc.?)

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.

PSNI hold information electronically however it also requires manual intervention. The information is held centrally on the NICHE database however it is not held in the formats as outlined in your request i.e. where they were reported from - we categorise as residential address, which is not necessarily their home address. We do have data for Hospital settings but hospitals also come under 'care' settings (along with residential children's homes, adult care homes, assisted living etc.) In requests 3 and 4 regarding 'suicide' and 'self-harm' markers would require each record to be checked to ascertain if each nominal has a marker, however this would show that it has the marker recorded (now) which may not necessarily refer to the time of the missing episode. As the fields for 'risk levels' are manual fields they may not reflect the information recorded. To respond to your requests in the period of your request would require a manual trawl through a total of 21,000 records and allowing a conservative estimate of 10 minutes per record would be a total of 3,500 hours.

This grossly exceeds the FOI legislative cost of 18 hours as set by the Secretary of State.

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

You may wish to submit a refined request in order that the cost of complying with your request may be facilitated within the 'appropriate limit'. In compliance with Section 16 of the Act, PSNI have considered how your request may be refined to bring it under the appropriate limit, and although we are unable to respond to the time period March – September 2020, we can provide responses for the time period of **'March to September 2019'** as PSNI have analysed some of the data for this time period.

For the period March – September 2019 we can provide the following data:

- Total numbers of the risk recorded as high/med/low
- Based on the total numbers this data can be broken down by gender and age
- Based on the total numbers this data can include missing from residential address, care settings (to include hospitals)
- **We cannot provide if there is a suicide or self –harm marker at the time of missing,** however we can provide data based on the information held on our computer systems as of now
- Total Numbers for persons located deceased

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.psnipolice.uk

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