

Keeping People Safe



## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



**Request Number:** FOI-2021-02994

**Keyword:** Complaints/Discipline

**Subject:** Social Media Vetting

### Request and Answer:

#### Request

Could you please tell me whether, for the purposes of such social media vetting, the details of platforms used and profile names used are dependent on disclosure by the applicant?

#### Answer

Your request for information has now been considered and we are not obliged to supply the information you have requested under Section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

Section 17(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), when refusing to provide such information (because the information is exempt) to provide the applicant with a notice which:

- (a) states the fact,
- (b) specifies the exemption in question and
- (c) states (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies.

The following exemption has been applied:

#### Section 21 - Information Reasonably Accessible by Other Means

PSNI can advise that the information requested above can be readily obtained and therefore section 21 of the FOIA can be applied. The purpose of the Section 21 exemption is to ensure that there is no right of access to information via FOIA if it is available to the requester by another route.

The full text of exemptions can be found at [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk) and further guidance on how they operate can be located on the Information Commissioner's Office website [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk).

In relation to your request, the extent to which vetting is undertaken is balanced against the level of access required to police premises, sensitive information and computer systems. This is necessary to achieve safeguards required within the Human Rights and Data Protection legislation, and that the information provided during the vetting process will be processed in strict confidence and will only be used for vetting purposes.

This is reflected within the [Approved Professional Practice \(Vetting\) as published by the College of](#)

## Policing.

As outlined in 7.22.25 and 7.22.26 of the Approved Professional Practice (Vetting), open source checks will be conducted proportionate to the level of vetting sought, the information at hand, coupled with the expectations placed on the applicant to comply with the vetting process.

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 email.

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 remain dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you may make a complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office, under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, 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', or use the ICO self-service portal available at [www.ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/officialinformation-concerns-report/official-information-concern/](http://www.ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/officialinformation-concerns-report/official-information-concern/)

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 their 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](http://www.psnj.police.uk)

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