



## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



**Request Number:** F-2022-02329

**Keyword:** Policing Themes, Operations and Investigations Calls for Service

**Subject:** Police Call Outs and Single Crewing

### 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

For the years 2022, 2021, 2020 and 2019, please could you provide the figures for:  
The total number of incidents that police were called out to.

#### Request 2

The total number of incidents that police were called out to, where they attended as a single unit or ‘single crewed.’

Please provide the information in an excel format broken down by year.

#### Request 3

What is your force's policy on single crewing?

#### Request 4

Is single crewing the default in your force?

## Request 5

Has this policy changed since 2019?

### 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 this information would exceed the 18 hour cost limit set under the FOI Act by the Secretary of State.

In relation to Request 2, the information requested is not held in a retrievable format that provides the information without manual intervention. In order to quantify the records involved a search was conducted for all incidents that police were called out to for the time periods requested, and this search returned a total of 1,668,672 incidents. Each incident report would have to be manually reviewed in an attempt to retrieve the desired information. Even to allow a minimum of 2 minutes per incident would take in excess of 55.622 hours; hugely exceeding the 18 hour cost limit.

**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. Unfortunately, as a manual trawl of records would be required for any relevant information for Request 2, we are unable to offer any refinement for this part of your request.

PSNI can advise, although excess cost removes the PSNI's obligations under the Freedom of Information Act, we have provided below the information that was retrieved prior to realising that the fees limit would be exceeded. We trust this is helpful, but it does not affect our legal right to rely on the fees regulations for the remainder of the request.

### **Response to Request 1**

2019 – 513,945  
2020 – 451,279  
2021 – 428,186  
2022 – 275,262

### **Response to Request 3**

PSNI have no policy at present, but are currently working on developing one.

### **Response to Request 4**

No.

### **Response to Request 5**

Not applicable

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 Corporate Information Manager, 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, if you remain unhappy about how your request has been handled you have the right to apply in writing to the Information Commissioner at Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. There are a number of other platforms you can use to contact the ICO and these can be found on the ICO's website at the following link: [Make a complaint | ICO](https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/) (<https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/>).

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.psni.police.uk](http://www.psni.police.uk)

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