



## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



**Request Number:** F-2023-00306

**Keyword:** Organisational Information HR Employment and Other

**Subject:** Front Line Policing

### 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)

Please provide the following information for each of the last ten years:

#### Request 1

The total number of PSNI officers?

#### Request 2

The total number of PSNI officers deployed to frontline policing duties?

#### Request 3

The total number of PSNI officers unable to be deployed to frontline policing duties due to injury (physical, mental, etc)?

#### Request 4

A breakdown of the reasons why those officers cannot be deployed to frontline policing duties (ie. the nature of their injury, etc)?

#### 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 has identified that retrieval of information to respond to your request would exceed the FOI legislative cost of 18 hours as set by the Secretary of State To answer Requests 3 and 4 would require examining every officer’s record to determine if they meet the criteria you have requested. The time required to carry this out for the current time period alone would far exceed the 18 hour cost limit. While, at the time of report, there are 1099 officers with some form of capability limitations in place via “duty adjustments”, it is not possible within time constraints to determine how many of these actually impact upon officers’ substantive operational roles. For example, an officer may be deemed unfit to participate in operations with a requirement for wearing full public order equipment (PPE) but their current substantive operational role may not require this so the restriction is not impacting on their performance.

It is also worth noting that the number of duty restrictions in place fluctuates, with restrictions reviewed and removed regularly.

The “duty adjustments” recorded on the SAP system are categorised as follows.

### For Police Officers & Police Staff

Sit for reasonable periods to write, read, use telephone, use IT & other tasks requiring manual dexterity; Run, walk reasonable distances and stand for reasonable periods; Make decisions and report situations to others; Evaluate information and to record details; Understand, retain and explain facts and procedures; Serve at any location in Northern Ireland; Do shift work, including night duty

### For Police only

Exercise reasonable physical force in restraint and retention in custody; Safely handle firearms both on and off duty; Drive operational police vehicles if required; Participate in operations with a requirement for wearing full public order equipment (PPE)

### For Police Staff only

To perform manual handling tasks; To respond to alarms and evacuate without assistance; To fleet drive if required; To work in a hazardous environment using appropriate safety /PPE equipment

At time of reporting, 694 Police Officers have “adjustments” that can be classified as “Permanent”, 321 have “adjustments” that can be classified as “Temporary – Long Term” and 84 have “adjustments” that can be classified as “Temporary Short Term”.

### **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, I have considered how your request may be refined to bring it under the appropriate limit. Subject to a new request PSNI can:

- Provide a response to Request 1 for the years 2012-2022.

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.

- We can further advise that there were 6785 officers as at 25<sup>th</sup> January 2023, of which 5510 were deployed to frontline duties.

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.police.uk](mailto:foi@psni.police.uk).

If, following an Internal Review carried out by an independent decision maker, you remain unhappy about how your request has been handled you have the right to apply in writing to the Information Commissioner, under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, 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 their 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.