



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2023-01324

Keyword: Crime/Incident Statistics Other and Multiple Crime/Incident types

Subject: Childrens Homes Call Outs

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

Part 1

Please provide the number of police call outs to children’s homes for 2022. This information was previously provided for the years 2017-2021 (FOI - <https://www.psni.police.uk/foi-disclosure-log/childrens-homes-call-outs>). Please provide this in the same format / breakdown for 2022

Part 2

If possible under FOI cost and other exceptions, please also provide how many call outs led to arrests, broken down in the same format as above (by home and Trust area).

Please provide this for each year 2017-2022. If not possible, please provide for 2022 and as many years as possible.

Part 3

If possible under FOI cost and other exceptions, please also provide a reason for the call out.

This could be broken down i.e. (i) away from placement without authorisation (i) missing; (ii) alleged criminal offences; (iii) safeguarding incidents; (iv) other

Please provide this for each year 2017-2022. If not possible, please provide for 2022 and as many years as possible.

Note - in a previous FOI, the number of call outs relating to missing persons was possible
<https://www.psni.police.uk/sites/default/files/2022-09/00295%20Police%20attendance%20at%20Glenmona%20Children%27s%20Home.pdf>

Part 4

Please provide a copy of any protocols or guidance/policy documents the PSNI have in dealing with call outs to children's homes.

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.

PSNI can advise that the number of call outs to children's homes for 2022 alone was 4783. The number of incidents does not reflect just calls for service. This can include Police generated activity such as bail, warrants etc.

In order to provide a response to Part 2 and Part 3 of your request would necessitate a manual check of each of the above call outs. At three minutes per incident to determine *how many call outs led to arrests* (Part 2) and *a reason for the call out* (Part 3) would put this request over 239 hours and consequently grossly over cost.

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, 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 table providing call outs broken down by Health Board Area for 2017-2022.

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.

- Your Part 4 requested "a copy of any protocols or guidance/policy documents the PSNI have in dealing with call outs to children's homes". As we are not clear on what you may specifically be seeking we have included links to relevant documentation that should provide this:

The Missing Children Protocol is available on the SBNI website at:

[Missing Children Protocol - June 2015.docx \(live.com\)](#)

Protocol for joint Investigation by Social Workers and Police Officers of Alleged and Suspected Cases of Child Abuse

https://www.proceduresonline.com/sbni/files/joint_invest_protocol.pdf

Child Protection Service Instruction (PSNI)

https://www.psni.police.uk/sites/default/files/2022-09/Child%20Protection%207%20September%202020_0.pdf

Child Sexual Exploitation- Definition and guide for Practitioners, local leaders and decision makers to protect children from Child Sexual Exploitation

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/591903/CSE_Guidance_Core_Document_13.02.2017.pdf

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.

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.psnipolice.uk

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