

[REDACTED]

FOI 42/25-26

6 June 2025

[REDACTED]

I refer to your email dated 2 May 2025 in which you requested further information as a result of our FOI response to you of same date (574 24-25 refers). Your request has been dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Freedom of Information Act 2000

The Freedom of Information Act creates rights of access for any person making a request for information to a public authority. The rights of access are twofold. First, to be informed by the public authority if it holds information of the description specified in the request, and if that is the case, secondly, to be provided with that information. These rights are subject to important limitations, which are designed to achieve a proper balance between the right to know and considerations of law and policy in the broader public interest.

You had asked the following:

1. *"Would your response cover all offences in relation to content by social media posts or might they have come under other legislation - if so, can you specify the legislation please?"*
2. *"Roughly speaking, I see there were 4000 suspects of whom 1000 were convicted with no prosecution against 1500 in this period. Am I reading your figures correctly?"*
3. *"Is there any way of getting an understanding of how many of these suspects were reported for hate crimes?"*
4. *"If a complaint was lodged in relation to contentious comments on LGBT matters, or religious matters can you say which offence these would each have come under?"*

In response to question 1, please be advised that the internet and social media can feature in a wide range of criminal offending, and there are a number of offences in

addition to those referred to in our previous response that may arise for consideration by prosecutors. The specific legislative provisions used by prosecutors to prosecute such offences is very much dependent on the nature of the offending, and the circumstances of a particular case. Therefore, it is not possible to provide an exhaustive list of legislation / offences used when prosecuting such cases.

In response to question 2, please be advised that for the period 2022 - 2024 the PPS received files including a total 3,935 suspects - of which 1,732 were directed for prosecution, 222 for diversion and 1,454 for no prosecution. A further 129 are pending decision. Of the 1,517 defendants dealt with in the courts, there have been 1,037 convictions, giving a conviction rate of 68.4%. Please note that a number of cases have not yet been dealt with in the courts.

In response to question 3, please be advised that the numbers of suspects reported by the PSNI in cases with a hate crime motivation by year were as follows: 39 in 2022, 49 in 2023 and 28 in 2024.

In response to question 4, please be advised that it is not possible to provide a response in this regard as the offences prosecuted would be very much dependent on the individual facts and circumstances of a particular case.

If you are dissatisfied in any way with the handling of your request, you have the right to request a review in accordance with our review procedure. You should do this as soon as possible or in any case within two months of the date of this response and you can do so by writing to the Head of Policy and Information, Public Prosecution Service, Belfast Chambers, 93 Chichester Street, BELFAST, BT1 3JR or alternatively by sending an e-mail to info@ppsni.gov.uk. You should state the grounds on which you are requesting the review.

Alternatively, you may wish to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely,

Information Management Team
Public Prosecution Service