

[REDACTED]

FOI 364/25-26

3 March 2026

[REDACTED]

I refer to your email dated 31 January 2026 in which you requested information. Clarification was sought by PPS on 13 February 2026 and provided by you on 19 February. 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. *"The number of prosecutions that have been brought in each of the last 5 years under Section 5 of the Criminal Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1967.*
2. *A breakdown by type of the relevant offences that were allegedly concealed.*
3. *The number of convictions in each of the last 5 years.*
4. *A breakdown by type of the relevant offences that were concealed for those convictions.*
5. *A breakdown of the penalties imposed.*

6. Any guidance that you have, whether from the Attorney General or elsewhere, and both internal and external, in relation to the prosecution and/or investigation of offences under Section 5 of the Act”.

In response to question 1, please see **Tables 1** and **2** below which provide the number of prosecution decisions issued for offences under sections 5(1) and 5(3) of the Criminal Law Act (NI) 1967 and a breakdown of the relevant offences by type for the period 1/4/20 to 31/3/25.

Table 1: Number of Prosecution Decisions Issued for Offences under Sections 5(1) and 5(3) of the Criminal Law Act (NI) 1967, 1 April 2020 - 31 March 2025

Financial Year	Number of Prosecution Decisions Issued (Number of Suspects)
2020/21	43
2021/22	48
2022/23	64
2023/24	56
2024/25	60
Total	271

Note: Numbers include both indictable and summary prosecution decisions. These have been combined in order to avoid potential identification of individual cases / disclosure of personal information.

Table 2: Prosecution Decisions Issued for Offences under Sections 5(1) and 5(3) of the Criminal Law Act (NI) 1967 – Breakdown of Offences, 1 April 2020 - 31 March 2025

Decision Offence Code Description	Decision Offence Legislation	Number of Suspects
Withholding information concerning arrestable offence	Section 5(1) of the Criminal Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1967	21
Wasteful employment of police time - false report of commission of offence	Section 5(3) of the Criminal Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1967	18
Wasting police time by false report concerning offence	Section 5(3) of the Criminal Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1967	157
Wasting police time by false report of persons safety	Section 5(3) of the Criminal Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1967	74
Wasting police time by false report of having information	Section 5(3) of the Criminal Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1967	4

Note: Individual suspects may have been prosecuted for more than one s.5 offence.

In response to question 2, I can advise that the offences that were allegedly concealed included: Murder, attempted murder, death by dangerous driving, withholding information concerning an arrestable offence and GBH with intent.

In response to question 3, please see **Tables 3 and 4** below which provide the number of defendants dealt with in the Magistrates' and Crown Courts by outcome for offences under sections 5(1) and 5(3) over the period 1/4/20 to 31/3/25.

Table 3: Number of Defendants Dealt With in the Magistrates' Court for Offences under Sections 5(1) and 5(3) of the Criminal Law Act (NI) 1967, 1 April 2020 - 31 March 2025

Financial Year	Plead Guilty All, Found Guilty All	Mixed Outcome*	Plead Not Guilty All, Found Not Guilty All	Other	Total
2020/21	11	5	1	3	20
2021/22	18	14	3	7	42
2022/23	24	19	3	9	55
2023/24	33	20	2	5	60
2024/25	28	24	3	6	61
Total	114	82	12	30	238

* Defendants may have been convicted of another offence (i.e. rather than under s5).

Table 4: Number of Defendants Dealt With in the Crown Court for Offences under Sections 5(1) and 5(3) of the Criminal Law Act (NI) 1967, 1 April 2020 - 31 March 2025

Financial Year	Plead Guilty All, Found Guilty All	Mixed Outcome*	Plead Not Guilty All, Found Not Guilty All	Total
2020/21	2	0	0	2
2021/22	0	2	1	3
2022/23	1	1	1	3
2023/24	0	3	3	6
2024/25	5	1	0	6
Total	8	7	5	20

* Defendants may have been convicted of another offence (i.e. rather than under s5).

In response to question 4, please note that it is not possible to provide a breakdown of convictions by offence type under section 5. This would require a manual check of all cases and would easily exceed the cost limit as defined in Section 12 of the FOI Act which makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit; for the PPS as a Government Department the limit is set at £600. This represents the estimated

cost of one person spending 3.5 working days in determining whether the department holds the information, locating, retrieving and extracting the information.

In response to question 5, please be advised that it is not possible to provide sentencing details in respect of section 5 offences. This is due to the way in which sentencing information is held on the PPS Case Management System; responding to your request would require a manual check to align sentence elements with the specific offences. You may wish to contact the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service for this information.

In respect of question 6, please see guidance from the Attorney General for NI [here](#) in relation to Section 5 of the Criminal Law Act. PPS does not hold internal guidance on these specific offences.

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