

FOI 642/18-19

Via email: [REDACTED]

25 July 2018

Dear [REDACTED]

I refer to your email dated 13 June 2018 in which you asked for statistics on prosecutions relating to abuse / assault where the victim was a member of Northern Ireland's emergency services.

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 for the following:

*"1. Figures for the number of prosecutions initiated in cases of abuse/assault, both physical and verbal, in which the victims were members of Northern Ireland's emergency services (ambulance/fire/police) in each year from 2013 to the present date.*

*2. Could you also give a breakdown of how many of these prosecutions resulted in a conviction, and how many ended up in acquittals or where the case was thrown out etc?*

*3. In the case of a conviction, could you also give details of the sentence handed down."*

In response to question 1, please note that it is not possible to identify cases where emergency services personnel have been the victim of abuse / assault, as the occupation of the victim is not recorded on the PPS Case Management System.

However a number of specific offences exist in respect of certain categories of emergency services personnel / related offences, namely Assault on Police and Assault on an Ambulance Worker, as follows:

Complaint Offence Description	Complaint Offence Legislation
ASSAULTING AN AMBULANCE WORKER	Section 54(1) of the Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2016
ASSAULT ON POLICE (OFFENCES PRIOR TO 9 FEBRUARY 1999 ONLY)	Section 7(1)(a) of the Criminal Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 1968
ASSAULT ON POLICE	Section 66(1) of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998

Data in respect of these offences have been provided as an alternative. Table 1 below, details the prosecutorial decisions issued for these offences between 1/1/13 and 27/6/18. It should be noted that prosecutions in respect of these offences are usually directed by the PPS where the assault was relatively minor in nature. More serious incidents, where injury has been caused, would be dealt with for example as Assault Occasioning Bodily Harm, Grievous Bodily Harm etc. As outlined above, it is not possible to identify such incidents.

In response to question 2, Tables 2a and 2b detail the outcomes of prosecutions in the Crown Court (indictable prosecution decisions) and the outcomes of prosecutions in the Magistrates' Courts (summary prosecution decisions) – i.e. for cases involving Assault on Police / Assault on an Ambulance Worker.

In respect of question 3, whilst data are held on outcomes, the PPS cannot provide an analysis of sentencing in respect of these offences. However this information may be available from the NI Courts and Tribunals Service.

All statistics should be read in conjunction with the explanatory notes.

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 Unit, Public Prosecution Service, Belfast Chambers, 93 Chichester Street, BELFAST, BT1 3JR or alternatively by sending an e-mail to [info@ppsni.gov.uk](mailto:info@ppsni.gov.uk). You should state clearly 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'PPS FOI Section', written in a cursive style.

PPS FOI Section

**Table 1**

**Prosecutorial Decisions Issued for Assault on Emergency Services\* between 1/1/13 and 27/6/18**

Based on Year Most Serious Decision Issued for each suspect

Calendar Year - Most Serious Decision Issued	Indictable Prosecution	Summary Prosecution	Diversion	No prosecution	Total
2013	42	1,837	128	36	2,043
2014	45	1,522	108	47	1,722
2015	49	1,592	162	37	1,840
2016	45	1,492	132	38	1,707
2017	30	1,382	109	50	1,571
2018	23	702	83	21	829
<b>Total</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>8,527</b>	<b>722</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>9,712</b>

\* Assault on Police / Assault on Ambulance Worker only.

**Table 2a**

**Indictable Prosecution Decisions for Assault on Emergency Services\* – Crown Court Outcomes for Decisions Issued between 1st January 2013 and 27th June 2018**

Based on Year Most Serious Decision Issued and the Indictable Outcome for each suspect\*\*

Calendar Year - Most Serious Decision Issued	Plead Guilty All, Found Guilty All	Found Guilty Of At Least One Offence	Acquitted	Other	Outcome Pending	Total
2013	11	30	0	0	1	42
2014	12	31	1	0	1	45
2015	10	33	1	1	4	49
2016	9	32	1	0	3	45
2017	5	17	0	0	8	30
2018	0	4	0	0	19	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>234</b>

\* Assault on Police / Assault on Ambulance Worker only.

**Table 2b**

**Summary Prosecution Decisions for Assault on Emergency Services\* –  
Magistrates' Court Outcomes for Decisions Issued between 1st January 2013  
and 27th June 2018**

Based on Year Most Serious Decision Issued and the Summary Outcome for each suspect\*\*

Calendar Year - Most Serious Decision Issued	Plead Guilty All, Found Guilty All	Found Guilty Of At Least One Offence	Acquitted	Other	Outcome Pending	Total
2013	835	746	32	203	21	1,837
2014	720	576	26	183	17	1,522
2015	715	639	24	179	35	1,592
2016	716	554	24	150	48	1,492
2017	645	476	16	128	117	1,382
2018	212	100	1	49	340	702
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,843</b>	<b>3,091</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>892</b>	<b>578</b>	<b>8,527</b>

\* Assault on Police / Assault on Ambulance Worker only.

\*\*Please note that the information provided in tables 2a and 2b refers to the year in which the decision was taken; the defendant may have been disposed of at any point after the decision was issued up to and including the 27th June 2018.

