



**Public
Prosecution
Service**

**Policy and Information Unit
Public Prosecution Service
Belfast Chambers
93 Chichester Street
Belfast BT1 3JR**

[REDACTED]

FOI 102-20/21

13 May 2020

[REDACTED]

I refer to your email dated 27 April 2020 in which you asked for information regarding prosecutions that have been delayed due to the coronavirus.

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:

I would like to find out how many prosecutions have been delayed due to social distancing rules with regards coronavirus.

In response to your query please be advised that prosecutorial decisions continue to be taken by prosecutors across all areas of the PPS. However, due to ongoing restrictions in the types of court business being dealt with (in accordance with the guidance issued by the Office of the Lord Chief Justice), the PPS is currently unable to progress the majority of cases directed for prosecution.

In terms of case numbers, we can advise that as at 5 May 2020 there were:

- 2,672 summary prosecution decisions (i.e. prosecution in the Magistrates' Courts) pending issue of a first summons to attend court; and

- 448 cases in which indictable prosecution decisions (i.e. prosecution in the Crown Court) have been taken but not yet issued so that defendants can progress to the Committal stage.

The NICTS may be in a position to provide data in respect of the numbers of cases listed that have been adjourned in accordance with the OLCJ guidance.

It should be noted that in order to increase levels of court business, the PPS senior management team continues to work with the OLCJ, the Department of Justice, the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service and other criminal justice partner agencies to develop revised court listing arrangements and related procedures.

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 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,

PPS FOI Section