

FOI 391/18-19

Via email: [REDACTED]

18 June 2018

Dear [REDACTED]

I refer to your email dated 23 May 2018 in which you asked for information on prosecutions in respect of begging in Northern Ireland.

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. How many people were prosecuted for begging in Northern Ireland in the last year?*
- 2. Of those how many were convicted?*
- 3. What sentences were handed out for each offence?*

In response to questions 1 and 2, please see the tables below detailing decisions issued for prosecution or diversion (Table 1) and data on convictions (Table 2). The offence considered of 'begging' relates to Section 3 of the Vagrancy (Ireland) Act 1847.

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

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,

PPS FOI Section

**Table 1:**

**Decisions Issued by PPS for Prosecution or Diversion between  
01/04/2017 and 31/03/2018) under Section 3 of the Vagrancy Act**

Based on the most serious decision issued.

<b>Financial Year</b>	<b>Summary Prosecution</b>	<b>Diversion</b>
17/18	40	11

**Table 2:**

**Convictions**

<b>Plea of Guilty on all Charges</b>	<b>Found Guilty on at least one Charge</b>	<b>Other</b>
27	4*	2

Of those dealt with by way of summary prosecution, 7 defendants have their cases ongoing (as of 04/06/2018).

\*Please note that 3 defendants in this category were found guilty of the begging offence.

