



Public
Prosecution
Service

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

[REDACTED]

FOI 63/23-24

[REDACTED]

31st May 2023

I refer to your email dated 1 May 2023 in which you asked for information in relation to the criminal offence of paying for sexual services of a person. 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. *“Can you tell me since new law came into force in 2015 how many people were prosecuted paying for sex.*
2. *Can you tell me what the penalties were? i.e. fine, jail etc”*

In response to question 1, please be advised that between 1 June 2015 and 31 March 2023 11 prosecution decisions were issued in respect of the specified offences (6 on indictment and 5 summary). A total of 29 persons were issued with diversionary disposals (e.g. cautions) over the same period.

Of the 11 defendants prosecuted, four had a ‘mixed outcome’ at court (found guilty of some, but not all offences), one was guilty of all charges and two had an ‘other’ outcome.¹ The remaining defendants are awaiting disposal in the courts.

¹ This includes defendant deceased, withdrawal (all charges), bound over for not having shown cause, bound over where charge withdrawn, withdrawn due to diversionary route.

In response to question 2, please be advised we do not hold this information, therefore, in terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I can confirm that under Section 1(1) (a) of the Act the PPS does not hold the requested information. You may wish to contact the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunal Service (NICTS), who are best placed to assist.

Please note that the relevant offences are as follows:

Decision Offence Code Description	Decision Offence Legislation
PAYING FOR THE SEXUAL SERVICES OF A PERSON (In force from 1 June 2015)	Article 64A(1)(a) of The Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008
PAYING FOR SEXUAL SERVICES OF A PERSON	Article 64A of the Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008

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,

PPS Information Management Team