



Public
Prosecution
Service

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

[REDACTED]

FOI 88/24-25

17 June 2024

[REDACTED]

I refer to your email dated 22 May 2024 in which you asked for information regarding prosecutions brought by the PPS under the 1824 Vagrancy Act and the Vagrancy Act (Ireland) 1847. 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. *“How many prosecutions the PPS has brought, since Jan 1, 2019, under the 1824 Vagrancy Act and the Vagrancy Act (Ireland) 1847 and how many convictions have resulted in these cases? Please provide total figures and break these down by year if possible.*
2. *Decisions Issued by PPS in respect of Suspects involving an offence under the Vagrancy Act 1824 and/or the Vagrancy (Ireland) Act 1847*
3. *Magistrates’ and Youth Court Outcomes in respect of defendants dealt with by way of Summary Prosecution for an offence under the Vagrancy Act 1824 and/or the Vagrancy (Ireland) Act 1847.”*

In response to questions 1 and 2, please see Table 1 below which details the number of prosecutorial decisions issued in respect of the 1824 and 1847 Acts for the period 1 January 2019 to 23 May 2024.

In response to question 3, please see Table 2 which details the outcomes for defendants dealt with in the Magistrates' and Youth Courts for offences under the 1824 and 1847 Acts for the period 1 January 2019 to 31 March 2024.

The tables should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes. The specific offences included in the analysis are listed at **Annex A**.

Table 1:
Decisions issued by PPS for offences under the Vagrancy Act 1824 and/or the Vagrancy (Ireland) Act 1847, 1 April 2019 - 23 May 2024

Number of suspects

Year	Summary Prosecution	Diversion	No Prosecution	Total
2019	85	19	8	112
2020	66	#	-	74
2021	50	-	#	56
2022	42	9	4	55
2023	39	#	-	48
2024	6	0	0	6
Total	288	44	19	351

Table 2:
Magistrates' and Youth Court outcomes in respect of defendants dealt with for an offence under the Vagrancy Act 1824 and/or the Vagrancy (Ireland) Act 1847 1 April 2019 - 31 March 2024¹

Number of Defendants

Year	Convicted of At Least One Offence ²	Acquitted	Other	Total
2019	74	4	10	88
2020	47	-	#	52
2021	43	#	-	44
2022	45	-	#	50
2023	29	-	#	33
2024	-	#	#	2
Total	240	9	20	269

¹. Outcomes have only been verified up to this date.

². 'Convicted of at least one offence' refers to the overall outcome for the defendant; some defendants may have been convicted of another offence (i.e. not an offence under the Vagrancy Act 1824 and/or the Vagrancy (Ireland) Act 1847).

"-" refers to a count less than 3.

"#" refers to a number >=3 suppressed to prevent disclosure of small numbers elsewhere.

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

Annex A: Offences

Offence Description	Offence Legislation
ATTEMPTED INDECENT EXPOSURE W/I TO INSULT A FEMALE	Section 4(d) of the Vagrancy Act 1824 and Article 3(1) of the Criminal Attempts and Conspiracy (Northern Ireland) Order 1983.
INDECENT EXPOSURE WITH INTENT TO INSULT A FEMALE	Section 4(d) of the Vagrancy Act 1824
FOUND ON PREMISES FOR UNLAWFUL PURPOSE	Section 4 of the Vagrancy Act 1824 as amended.
ARMED WITH OFFENSIVE WEAPON WITH INTENT TO COMMIT OFFENCE (REPEALED 4 MAY 2011)	Section 4 of the Vagrancy Act 1824
POSSESSING INSTRUMENT WITH INTENT TO COMMIT AN OFFENCE	Section 4 of the Vagrancy Act 1824.
BEGGING	Section 3 of the Vagrancy (Ireland) Act 1847.
UNLAWFUL CHARITABLE COLLECTION	Section 4 of the Vagrancy Act 1824 as amended bY the Summary Jurisdiction and Criminal Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 1935.