

PBNI Disclosure Log – Response to Request

Request Reference: 023.04.21
Date of Request: 16 August 2021
Date of Response: 06 September 2021

Request and Response

Under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2001 I would like to request the following information:

1. How many times PBNI officers got to meet someone to get it right, would it be valid if the person never got interviewed?
2. How a person is assessed for an ACE score? Do PBNI officers have to go over questions with a person to be given an ACE score?
3. If a person never took part in a procedure but were given an ACE score would this be valid?
4. What are the policies and procedures for bringing an ACE score down?
5. What are the policies and procedures for someone having a McKenzie Friend in the room when being interviewed by PBNI officers if the person is deemed to have a low IQ and understanding someone to act as an appropriate adult to help them understand?

Question 1

How many times PBNI officers got to meet someone to get it right, would it be valid if the person never got interviewed?

Response:

When someone is in the community, PBNI carry out ACE assessments and review for high/medium ACE every 26 weeks from the date of sentence (for a Community Order) or released from custody then every 26 weeks until end of order (or more regularly if individuals are assessed as posing a Significant Risk of Serious Harm) but can be reviewed more frequently should anything significant occur, for example further offending or recall to prison or a positive change such as gaining employment / stable accommodation. The timescales of ACE reviews in custody are somewhat different, and an ACE will be completed in relation to all prisoners who shall be subject to post release supervision at the point of committal to custody following conviction, unless an ACE has been completed within the previous 6 months or at Pre-Sentence Report stage. A further ACE will be completed prior to the prisoner's release, (unless an ACE has been completed within the previous 6 months). Additional ACE reviews will be completed at "critical transition/trigger points", for example in advance of a Parole Commissioners for Northern Ireland hearing in regards to a prisoner (unless an ACE has been completed within the previous 6 months).

Question 2

How a person is assessed for an ACE score? Do PBNI officers have to go over questions with a person to be given an ACE score?

Response:

An ACE assessment is carried out by a social work qualified Probation Officer. The assessment includes a scoring system informed by discussions with the individual, relevant documentation for example criminal record, Court depositions and the Probation Officers professional judgement. The ACE assessment form is not intended as an interview guide and as such there are no set questions and can be shared with the service user during an interview.

Question 3

If a person never took part in a procedure but were given an Ace score would this be valid?

Response:

The information to inform an ACE assessment is gathered through knowledge of the individual, usually including from discussions with the person in question, and alongside relevant documentation. There will be occasions when the person in question does not wish to engage with PBNI, and this will be taken into account and noted on the ACE.

Question 4

What are the policies and procedures for bringing an Ace score down?

Response:

Scores can be increased or decreased based on changes in the individual's situation. ACE is a dynamic tool and will reflect progress or otherwise made by the individual during the period of supervision. No two individuals' assessments will be the same as the assessment must reflect for example, the individual's particular social and personal circumstances, the nature of the offence, offence history and compliance with supervision. This informs the reason the ACE assessment is regularly reviewed.

Question 5

What are the policies and procedures for someone having a McKenzie Friend in the room when being interviewed by PBNI officers if the person is deemed to have a low IQ and understanding someone to act as an appropriate adult to help them understand?

Response:

A McKenzie friend is a role used for other purposes within custody by the Northern Ireland Prison Service not relating to PBNI and is normally only used for prison adjudications. A McKenzie friend falls under the remit of the Northern Ireland Prison Services' definition and they have specific criteria for who would meet approval for that role. In respect of PBNI, we will always offer to meet people to go through the ACE document in detail to ensure as full an understanding as possible.

If you have any queries about this letter, or if you feel I have misinterpreted your request please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are unhappy with the way PBNI has handled your request, you may ask for an internal review using our complaints procedure. A copy of our [complaints procedure](#) is available on our website www.pbni.org.uk. If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right 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.

Please note that PBNI publishes responses to requests for information on its website where we believe there may be a wider public interest. If requests are published they are anonymised i.e. details of the requester are not published.