



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

Please note the text of this request has been reproduced exactly as received.

FOI Reference number: FOI 24/2026

Date: 6 May 2026

Request:

I would like to request the following information for each calendar year from 2020 to 2026 inclusive:

- The number of cyber security breaches that have being identified that were found to be a result of a malicious threat actor (i.e. not accidental data breach)
- The breakdown in high-level causes of these breaches as identified by cyber security incident response teams (CSIRTs), for example (but not limited to) unpatched software/hardware, lack of multi-factor authentication (MFA), leaked user credentials, lack of in-transit encryption, etc
- The number of breaches that occurred that were attributed to a previously known vulnerability to the organisations hardware, software, policies, or processes, for example where system was known to be at risk due to being unpatched or out of support, or security controls were recommended but not enforced, and was defined within the resulting incident response report.
- The estimated combined costs incurred as a result of cyber security breaches defined in request number one in each year.

No specific details are requested in relation to software/hardware utilisation, but rather high-level causes of breaches. I believe the high-level nature of this request does not allow for the use of s.31(1)(a) of the FOIA as this would not be likely to prejudice the security of your systems or data, as these are historical incidents which have since been dealt with. The public interest in understanding breach causes across public sector organisations outweighs the public interest in the exemption.

Answer

The Policing Board's IT system is provided under the Northern Ireland Civil Service centralised IT solution. The Board's IT services and systems have been provided by IT Assist since 2016. They form part of Digital, Security and Finance Shared Services (DSF) which sits within the Department of Finance (DoF). IT Assist provide Digital Shared Services to all Northern Ireland's Government Departments (NICS) and 50 Arm's Length Bodies.

Digital Security and Engagement (DSE), which also sits within the DoF, provides a diverse range of digital security services and technical expertise to IT Assist and the wider NICS. Their Cyber Resilience, Security and Information Assurance Teams work closely with the Cabinet Office and National Cyber Security Centre.

IT Assist, in conjunction with DSE, apply a robust programme of device management, patching and software update programmes to reduce the risk of vulnerability through emerging threats or outdated legacy issues.

The responses to your questions above would be held by DSE. We would recommend that you send your FOI request to the Department of Finance directly. The email address is foi@finance-ni.gov.uk

If you have queries about this request or the decision please contact the Board quoting the reference number above. If you are unhappy with the service you have received and wish to make a complaint or request a review you should contact the Board's Chief Executive -

Via Email: foi@nipolicingboard.org.uk

Or in writing at the following address:

Northern Ireland Policing Board
James House
Block D
2 – 4 Cromac Avenue
The Gasworks
Belfast
BT7 2JA

You should contact the Board within 40 working days of this response.

If you are not content with the outcome of your complaint, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner. Generally, the Information Commissioner's Office cannot investigate or make a decision on a case unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by the Board. You should make complaints to the ICO within six weeks of receiving the outcome of an internal review.

The Information Commissioner can be contacted at the following web link –

www.ico.org.uk/foicomplaints

or in writing at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
SK9 5AF

Telephone: - 0303 1231114
Email: - ni@ico.org.uk

Please be advised that Policing Board replies under Freedom of Information may be released into the public domain via our website @ www.nipolicingboard.org.uk.

Personal details in respect of your request have, where applicable, been removed to protect confidentiality.