



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2008-03967

Keyword: Complaints/Discipline

Subject: COMPLAINTS RECORDED AGAINST BLACK MINORITY ETHNIC POLICE OFFICERS

Request:

I would like to request the following information from your force area under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 for each of the last 5 financial years:

Question 1. The total number of public complaints recorded against Black Minority police officers (clarified as all minority ethnic officer by category).

Question 2. The total number of internal investigations recorded against Black Minority police officers (clarified as relating to formal investigations recorded against all ethnic officers by category conducted by the Professional Standards Department of the PSNI where an investigating officer has been appointed and commencing in each financial years requested).

Question 3. The total number of Black Minority Ethnic police officers suspended (clarified as all minority ethnic officer by category).

Question 4. The total number of public complaints recorded against all police officers.

Question 5. The total number of internal investigations recorded against all police officers. (clarified as relating to formal investigations conducted by the Professional Standards Department of the PSNI where an investigating officer has been appointed and commencing in each financial year).

Question 6. The total number of police officers suspended.

Answer:

This is to inform you that the Police Service of Northern Ireland has now completed its search for the information you requested. The decision has been taken to disclose the located information to you in full.

Answer 1. As the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland has responsibility for investigating complaints against the police from members of the public you have agreed to request these details from the Police Ombudsman's Office.

Answer 2. In 2003/2004 financial year there were no recorded minority ethnic officers investigated by PSNI's Professional Standards Department.

In 2004/2005 financial year there was 1 recorded minority ethnic officer investigated by PSNI's Professional Standards Department (1 officer who declared their ethnicity as 'Chinese').

In 2005/2006 financial year there were no recorded minority ethnic officers investigated by PSNI's Professional Standards Department.

In 2006/2007 financial year there were no recorded minority ethnic officers investigated by PSNI's Professional Standards Department.

In 2007/2008 financial year there were no recorded minority ethnic officers investigated by PSNI's Professional Standards Department.

PSNI Officers are not obliged to declare their ethnic background. However, the PSNI's Equality and Diversity Unit record the ethnic background from those officers who provide relevant details. Details are recorded under the following minority ethnic groups:

Chinese
Indian
Pakistani
Bangladeshi
Black African
Black Caribbean
Black Other
Irish Traveller
Mixed Ethnic
Other.

It should be noted that details of the officer's ethnic background relate to records available at the commencement of the investigation.

Not all formal investigations result in officers facing criminal and/or disciplinary offences and not all officers who are charged with criminal and/or disciplinary offences are convicted.

Answer 3. No recorded minority ethnic officer was suspended in any of the 5 financial years requested. Suspensions relate to those effected in each of the 5 financial years requested.

Answer 4. As the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland has responsibility for investigating complaints against the police from members of the public you have agreed to make to request these details from the Police Ombudsman's Office.

Answer 5. In 2003/2004 financial year there were 120 police officers formally investigated internally by Professional Standards Department.

In 2004/2005 financial year there were 129 police officers formally investigated internally by Professional Standards Department.

In 2005/2006 financial year there were 114 police officers formally investigated internally by Professional Standards Department.

In 2006/2007 financial year there were 104 police officers formally investigated internally by Professional Standards Department.

In 2007/2008 year there were 134 police officers formally investigated internally by Professional Standards Department.

Again it should be noted that not all formal investigations result in officers facing criminal and/or disciplinary offences and not all officers who are charged with criminal and/or disciplinary offences are convicted.

It should be noted that each case is examined on an individual basis to determine the level and nature of misconduct of the officer and the extent to which the PSNI's Code of Ethics has been breached. The seriousness of the offence, the circumstances surrounding its commission and its potential impact will dictate the level of action to be pursued and the misconduct sanction ultimately imposed.

Answer 6. The figures produced below relate to police officers whose suspensions were effected in each of the financial years mentioned.

2003/2004 – 14 officers suspended
2004/2005 – 12 police officers suspended
2005/2006 – 20 police officers suspended

2006/2007 – 23 police officers suspended
2007/2008 – 25 police officers suspended

The decision to suspend an officer is only taken in exceptional circumstances after all other options have been considered.

The figures supplied have been compiled by the PSNI's Professional Standards Department, which has responsibility for internal discipline relating to police officers and the PSNI's Equality and Diversity Unit. All the details requested are not recorded centrally and were obtained from the interrogation of several databases and the manual examination of a number of files. Information extracted in this manner may not be as accurate as that extracted from a single central database.

The Police Service expects its staff to behave professionally, ethically and with the utmost integrity at all times. Whilst the Service takes extremely seriously any allegation of wrongdoing, the number of formal investigations and suspensions must be put into context of the overall size of the PSNI i.e. just over 9000 officers at the date of your request.

United Kingdom Police Services do not use generic systems to capture information. For this reason the PSNI's response to your questions should not be used for comparison purposes with any other Police Service.

If you have any queries regarding your request or the decision please do not hesitate to contact the Freedom of Information Team on 028 9070 0164. When contacting the Freedom of Information Team, please quote the reference number listed at the beginning of this letter.

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 complaints procedure. In the event that you require a review to be undertaken, you can do so by writing to the Head of the Freedom of Information Team, Freedom of Information, and PSNI Headquarters, 65 Knock Road Belfast BT5 6LE or by emailing foi@psni.pnn.police.uk

If following an internal review you remain dissatisfied in anyway with the handling of the request you may make a complaint to the Information Commissioner and ask that they investigate whether the PSNI has complied with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act. You can write to the Information Commissioner at Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF. In most circumstances the Information Commissioner will not investigate a complaint unless an internal review procedure has been carried out, however the Commissioner has the option to investigate the matter at his discretion.

Please be advised that all PSNI replies under Freedom of Information will be released simultaneously into the public domain via our website @ www.psni.police.uk

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