



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2009-01797

Keyword: Complaints/Discipline

Subject: DIGNITY AT WORK OR HATE CRIME ISSUES

Request and Answer:

Question

Could you please provide me with the total number of PSNI officers for the past three years (clarified as financial years) who have had disciplinary proceedings (clarified as relating to those cases which resulted in the issue of an informal or formal sanction) initiated against them for any dignity at work or hate crime issue, which should for the purpose of this request at least include any proceedings concerning the following:

Harassment, bullying, discrimination, homophobia, unwanted unreasonable or offensive conduct, unwanted physical contact (from touching to assault), verbal or physical threats or abuse, sectarian, political, racist or derogatory remarks (clarified as being police on police or police on police staff).

If it is feasible could you provide a breakdown for each year separating informal procedure from formal procedure (clarified as relating to the imposition of informal and formal sanctions)?

You have indicated by e mail on 5th June 2009 that you will be content to receive details as recorded by the Professional Standards Department of the PSNI

Answer

During the 2006/2007 financial year, 12 officers (10 separate incidents) received disciplinary sanctions associated with allegations which include one or more of the following categories:

Bullying, harassment (including sexual harassment), inappropriate language, inappropriate behaviour and racist and sectarian comments.

All officers received an informal sanction i.e. 5 x written warning, 6 x advice and guidance and 1 x management discussion. In an 11th incident one officer was convicted at a criminal court but left the PSNI prior to completion of the disciplinary process.

In one of the 10 incidents a civilian staff member was also disciplined and received a formal sanction of dismissal.

In the 2007/2008 financial year, 8 officers (6 separate incidents) received disciplinary sanctions associated with allegations which include one or more of the following categories:

Bullying, inappropriate language and behaviour and foul and abusive language.

One officer appeared before a Misconduct Panel and received a formal sanction of a fine. The remaining 7 officers all received informal sanctions (3 x written warning and 4 x advice and guidance).

One officer in the 2008/2009 financial year faced an allegation of making a homophobic comment. This officer received an informal sanction of a written warning.

The figures relate to the year on which behaviour occurred and not to the imposition of the sanction. The year of occurrence and the year of issue of the sanction may not necessarily fall within the same period.

The figures supplied have been compiled by the PSNI's Professional Standards Department which has responsibility for internal discipline relating to police officers. All the details requested are not recorded centrally and were obtained from the interrogation of several databases across a number of different categories 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.

It should be noted that each case of alleged misconduct 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.

Whilst the PSNI takes extremely seriously any allegation of wrongdoing and will not hesitate to take appropriate action where breaches of misconduct occur, the number of cases must be put into context of the overall size of the PSNI of just over 8500 officers as of the date of your request.

United Kingdom Police Services do not use generic systems to capture information. For this reason 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 email.

If you are dissatisfied in any way with the handling of your request, you have the right to request a review. You should do this as soon as possible, or in any case within two months of the date of issue of this letter. In the event that you require a review to be undertaken, you can do so by writing to the Head of Freedom of Information, PSNI Headquarters, 65 Knock Road, Belfast, and BT5 6LE or by emailing foi@psni.pnn.police.uk.

If following an internal review, carried out by an independent decision maker, you were to remain dissatisfied in any way with the handling of the request you may make a complaint, under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, to the Information Commissioner's Office 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 PSNI replies under Freedom of Information may be released into the public domain via our website @ <http://www.psni.police.uk/>

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