



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



**Request Number:** F-2009-00846

**Keyword:** Complaints/Discipline

**Subject:** OFFICERS SUSPENDED/DISCIPLINED - STRABANE AREA COMMAND

### Request and Answer:

I am writing to confirm that the Police Service of Northern Ireland has now completed its search for the information and I have decided to release the information sought in full.

#### Question 1

Since January 2008, how many officers based in the Strabane District Command Unit have faced disciplinary action or suspension – clarified as referring to formal discipline where an officer has appeared before a misconduct panel and received a sanction?

#### Answer

Due restructuring within the PSNI the Strabane District Command Unit ceased to be a District Command Unit on 1.4.07. The area comprising the old District Command Unit is now known as the Strabane Area Command and forms part of the new G District.

The Strabane Area Command consists of the following stations:

Strabane  
Castleberg  
Donemana  
Newtownstewart  
Plumbridge  
Sion Mills

From the 1/1/2008 until the date receipt of your request 3 officers in the Strabane Area Command have been formally disciplined. Two officers were suspended from duty during the same period.

#### Question 2

How many faced discipline/suspension for failing to carry out their duties in full?

#### Answer

None.

#### Question 3

What were the reasons for any suspensions?

#### Answer

Both officers were suspended as a consequence of allegations that criminal offences had been committed.

The Police Service expects its staff to behave professionally, ethically and with the utmost integrity at all times. Any conduct, whether on or off duty, which brings or is likely to bring discredit on the Police Service will be investigated in order to establish whether or not a breach of the Code of Ethics has occurred. A breach of the code may result in a criminal or disciplinary investigation by the Office of the Ombudsman or the Police Service and, consistent with the seriousness of an allegation, the circumstances surrounding its commission and its potential impact, an officer may be suspended pending the outcome of both a criminal and misconduct investigation. The decision to suspend an officer is only taken in exceptional circumstances after all other options, including 'alternative duties', have been considered.

Considerations include:

- (i) The nature and seriousness of the alleged action of the individual(s), including any apparent aggravating or mitigating factors;
- (ii) The strength of evidence or nature of the investigation;
- (iii) The public interest and that of the Police Service;
- (iv) The reputation of the PSNI and the effect on public confidence;
- (v) Whether effective investigation of the allegation may be compromised if the officer remains in post;
- (vi) The nature of the current post held, and alternative posts, and the potential risk to the individual, public, colleagues or operations if the officer is not suspended;
- (vii) The likely outcome of a conviction in court or of a finding against the officer at a disciplinary hearing;
- (viii) The impact on organisational efficiency.

It should be noted that the above information relates to officers who were based within the areas mentioned at the time when the misconduct occurred/suspension was effected. Disciplinary action does not necessarily fall within the same year as detection

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 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 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 Service takes extremely seriously any allegation of wrongdoing, the number of cases must be put into context of the overall number of PSNI officers attached to the area concerned i.e. just over 400 officers at 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 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, BT5 6LE or by emailing [foi@psni.pnn.police.uk](mailto: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 will be released into the public domain via our website @ [www.psni.police.uk](http://www.psni.police.uk).

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