



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2009-02406

Keyword: Complaints/Discipline

Subject: SUSPENDED OFFICERS - JULY 2009

Request and Answer:

Question 1

How many police are currently suspended under investigation for criminal offences?

Answer

On the date your request was received a total of 25 officers were suspended as a consequence of investigations alleging the commission of criminal offences (including motoring offences).

It should be noted that 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.

Question 2

How much is their pay while on suspension? Clarified as the salary pay bands or the exact salaries of the officers.

Answer

The pay bands of the officers suspended are as follows:

£22104 - £34707 – 18 officers

£34707-39006 – 6 officers

No salary – 1 officer

Pay and allowances of suspended officers is governed by either Regulation 36(5), 59 and Schedule 7 of the Royal Ulster Constabulary Regulations 1996 or Regulations 23(4), 36 and Schedule 3 of the Police Service of Northern Ireland Regulations 2005 depending when the suspension was effected. In summary a suspended officer receives full salary and allowance entitlement while suspended unless detained, in pursuance of a sentence of a court, in a prison or other institution to which the Prison Act (Northern Ireland) 1953 applies or is in custody (whether in prison or elsewhere) between conviction by a court and sentence, or has absented himself/herself from duty and whose whereabouts are unknown to the Chief Constable. Full details of the Regulations may be viewed by visiting website www.ppsi.gov.uk.

Part time officers receive no salary during suspension.

Question 3

What offences are they being investigated for?

Answer

The alleged offences include drink driving, assault (including sexual), attempting to pervert the course of justice, false accounting, threats to kill, misfeasance in public office, possession of firearm in suspicious circumstances, fraud, breach of Data Protection Act and theft.

More than one officer may be under investigation for each alleged offence. The alleged offence relates to the more serious offence under investigation and other less serious offences may also be subject to enquiry.

Question 4

How many officers were investigated this year for drink-driving offences? Clarified as the financial year 2008/2009 and so far this financial year.

Answer

For the financial year 2008/2009 a total of 9 officers were detected for drink driving related offences and consequently were subject to investigations. Two officers have been detected in the current financial year. The figures relate to investigations and not convictions. Not all investigations result in convictions.

The figures supplied have been compiled by the PSNI's Professional Standards Department which has responsibility for internal discipline relating to police officers and Central Pay Branch. 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.

Whilst the PSNI takes seriously any wrongdoing by a police officer, the number of suspensions must be put into context of the overall size of the PSNI i.e. around 8500 officers at date of 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, 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.psnipolice.uk/>

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