



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2010-02690

Keyword: Complaints/Discipline

Subject: Complaints in Relation to Police Dogs

Request and 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.

Question 1

Under the Freedom of Information Act, please could you provide me with the following information:

The number of complaints received by your force about the behaviour/action of your police dogs or if your force has them, horses since 1st January 2007. Please include all recorded incidents where members of the public or other police workers have complained that they have been injured by the animals or their property damaged by them.

Answer

The Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI) do not utilise horses. The Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, investigate complaints against police by or on behalf of members of the public. PSNI, Professional Standards Department has record of six complaints made to the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland in relation to the behaviour/action of police dogs since 1st January 2007 – 31st August 2010.

Question 2

Where possible, please provide a brief description of each incident giving the circumstances in which it occurred and details of the alleged action as well as any subsequent action taken by your force.

Answer

Further to the response to question one, the Northern Ireland Independent Police Complaints Body, the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, investigate complaints against police or 'designated staff members' by or on behalf of members of the public. PSNI Professional Standards Department receive some information regarding these complaints. However if no police disciplinary issues arise from an Ombudsman investigation, Professional Standards Department do not receive a comprehensive report.

One complaint referred to an incident where the complainant alleged that whilst he was being arrested, a police dog mauled him. As a result of this complaint, the officer involved received an

informal disciplinary sanction of advice and guidance. Professional Standards Department do not hold any details of the remaining five complaints, except that no police officer was disciplined as a result.

This information has been supplied by the Professional Standards Department of the PSNI which has responsibility relating to formal discipline of police officers and relates to cases reported to that Department only.

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. 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 @ www.psni.police.uk

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