



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2012-00365

Keyword: Complaints/Discipline

Subject: Unauthorised Access of Police Systems

Request and Answer:

I am writing to confirm that the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) has now completed its search for the information requested.

Question

I would like to make a freedom of information request for the following information, covering the period June 1st 2011 – December 31st 2011:

A list of all recorded instances of data protection breaches within your police force, e.g. unwarranted/unauthorised accessing of databases; misuse of personal information, etc.

Accompanying information on what subsequent action was taken, e.g. no further action; disciplinary proceedings; criminal proceedings, etc.

If it is possible to make a brief clarification, I would like to make sure that my request covers both police officers and civilian staff.

Clarification

On February 8, 2012, we advised you of the following;

“In relation to Police Officers, the PSNI's Professional Standards Department can provide (subject to any exemptions that may apply) the number of Police Officers who have been disciplined between June 2011 and December 2011 for inappropriate access of police systems. The Department can also supply the number of officers who were criminally convicted of breach of the Data Protection Act for the time-frame requested.

Discipline information for Police Staff is not held in a central location within the PSNI and to retrieve the information you require would involve input from all Human Resources Managers in each of the PSNI's Districts and Departments. Initial enquiries have indicated that to fulfil this part of the request is likely to push your request over the appropriate FOI cost threshold of 18 hours retrieval time.”

Subsequently you agreed to receive the information that PSD could provide for Police Officers only. This is outlined below.

Question 1

The number of police officers who have been disciplined between June 2011 and December 2011 for inappropriate access of police systems

Answer

In the time-frame requested, three officers were disciplined at a formal misconduct hearing for inappropriately accessing police systems. The sanction imposed in each case was fine, reprimand, and reduction in pay.

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 will dictate the misconduct sanction ultimately imposed.

Question 2

The number of officers who were criminally convicted of breach of the data protection act between June 2011 and December 2011

Answer

One officer received a conviction for breach of the data protection act in the time-frame requested.

If you have any queries regarding your request or the decision please do not hesitate to contact me 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.