



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2012-00077

Keyword: Complaints/Discipline

Subject: Suspended Officers

Request and Answer:

Question 1

As of 01.01.12 how many of your force's officers were suspended on full pay? Please provide me with a breakdown showing the number of officers suspended in each rank of your force as of 01.01.2012

Answer

As of 01.01.12, one inspector, three sergeants and twenty constables, i.e. twenty four officers were suspended on full pay.

Question 2

Please provide me with a list showing the date (month/year) that each officer suspended as of 01.01.12 was first suspended from duty on full pay

Answer

The date (month/year) that each officer currently suspended was first suspended from duty on full pay is as follows;

Number of officers	Date suspension initiated
1 officer	October 2004
1 officer	July 2008
1 officer	May 2009
1 officer	August 2009
1 officer	April 2010
1 officer	August 2010
1 officer	October 2010
1 officer	December 2010
1 officer	January 2011
1 officer	March 2011
1 officer	May 2011
2 officers	June 2011
2 officers	July 2011
2 officers	September 2011
2 officers	October 2011
2 officers	November 2011
3 officers	December 2011

Question 3

How many of the suspended officers as of 01.01.2011 returned to work, were dismissed, resigned or are still suspended

Answer

Four officers returned to work, five officers were dismissed/required to resign, five officers resigned and eight officers are still suspended.

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.

At present, legislation (Regulation 6, Royal Ulster Constabulary (Conduct) Regulations 2000) dictates that (except for 'Special Cases') all criminal proceedings must be finalised before misconduct proceedings can take place. This includes any subsequent appeals against conviction or sentence. Unfortunately, awaiting completion of criminal proceedings accounts for the majority of delay in many of the cases involving suspended officers. PSNI only takes the decision to suspend officers in exceptional circumstances after all other options, including deployment to alternative duties, have been considered.

PSNI is currently working with the Department of Justice to seek legislative reform of the Police conduct and performance system. It is anticipated that proposed reforms will have the effect of dramatically reducing the time officers spend on suspension.

The information supplied has been compiled by the PSNI's Professional Standards Department which has responsibility for internal discipline relating to police officers.

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 7500 officers at date of request.

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.