



## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



**Request Number:** F-2014-04284

**Keyword:** Complaints/Discipline

**Subject:** Officers Investigated for Racism

### Request and Answer:

#### Question 1

Could you tell me how many officers have been sacked for racism in the past five financial years please? (April 2013 - March 2014, April 2012 - March 2013, April 2011 - March 2012, April 2010 - March 2011, April 2009 - March 2010). Could you also include the ranks of those officers, where they were based and where possible, the circumstances in which they were sacked.

#### Clarification sought

To enable the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) to meet your request could you please provide further clarification on the following - The Office of the Police Ombudsman provides an independent police complaints system under the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998. This Office investigates complaints against police officers by members of the public and would therefore hold information in relation to officers investigated for racism as a result of a complaint by a member of the public. The attached link to the OPONI website contains a statistical bulletin which contains information in relation to the number of racism complaints under the category discriminatory behaviour.

<http://www.policeombudsman.org>

Would you be content to receive information regarding your FOI request for the last four financial years and where officers were investigated by Discipline Branch only?

#### Clarification received

Yes that's fine.

#### 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.

No PSNI officers have been sacked for racism in the past four financial years.

#### Question 2

Can you also tell me how many officers were investigated in total during this period. So, for example, between April 2013 and March 2014, seven officers were investigated in total and, of these, three

were sacked. These were ?? a sergeant who posted racist messages on Twitter, a PC who ?? made racist comments while on patrol and ?? a chief constable who called a member of the public a ????.

If the scope of this request is too vast can you adjust it appropriately so I still receive some of the information. In the first instance by reducing the time period to the past four years, then three years etc.

### **Answer**

Sixteen officers were investigated for racist behaviour in the past four financial years, one officer in 2010/11, seven officers in 2012/13 and eight officers in 2013/14. All of these officers were investigated in relation to inappropriate text messages that included content of a racist nature.

As a result of investigations in relation to inappropriate text messages the Deputy Chief Constable issued direction to the Organisation, an extract of which is as follows:

*'The Code of Ethics outlines the high standards of behaviour expected from police officers both on and off duty. Article 1.10 states; "whether on or off duty, police officers shall not behave in a way that is likely to bring discredit upon the Police Service".*

*Everyone, regardless of their background and personal circumstances, has the right to be treated by members of the Police Service with dignity and respect. This is what personal policing is all about. Furthermore the public have a right to expect police officers to evidence the highest standards of behaviour both on and off duty. Text messaging can be appropriate for all sorts of acceptable, informative, humorous and positive uses. However sending inappropriate, offensive texts or images is not acceptable behaviour. In certain circumstances sending such texts may not only be a breach of the Code of Ethics but also a breach of the Telecommunications legislation. It is clearly unacceptable for Police Officers to send inappropriate text messages, on or off duty, and where evidence of such is uncovered then those involved may face serious consequences'*

The information supplied has been compiled by Discipline Branch, Service Improvement Department, which has responsibility for internal discipline relating to police officers.

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](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 may 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.

