



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2014-05862

Keyword: Complaints/Discipline

Subject: Misuse of Police Computer Systems

Request and Answer:

Question 1

Since January 2012 how many officers have been investigated for misuse of a police computer system?

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.

Since January 2012, forty-three officers have been investigated for misuse of police computers.

Question 2

Of those police officers, how many have had a file prepared and sent to PPS?

Answer

To date, nineteen cases have been sent to the PPS for prosecutorial decision. The remaining cases are either ongoing, closed as unsubstantiated, or dealt with under misconduct only, as the offence was deemed to be low-level in nature.

Internal investigations into an alleged data protection breach will be assessed according to the circumstances of the case and relevant aggravating and mitigating factors. Section 10.3.2 of the ACPO Data Protection Manual of Guidance provides UK Police Services with a framework to measure the gravity of potential data protection breaches.

Question 3

Of those files submitted to PPS how many resulted in a recommendation to prosecute?

Answer

The PPS has directed prosecution in five cases. It should be noted that there are further cases still awaiting PPS decision.

Question 4

What sanctions were imposed on the police officers who were investigated but not sent to the PPS?

Answer

The cases where alleged misuse of police systems and was unsubstantiated, resulted in no further action. In cases where it was determined that an officer inappropriately accessed a police system but the misuse was deemed to be low-level, the Supervising Member, Discipline Branch, directed informal disciplinary sanctions.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland expects its staff to behave professionally, ethically and with the utmost integrity at all times. Any officer who breaches the ethical standards expected of them, either on or off duty, can expect to be disciplined accordingly. It should be noted that the average strength of the PSNI over the last three years is around 7200 officers.

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.

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.