



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2015-00632

Keyword: Complaints/Discipline

Subject: Racial Complaints Against Officers 2013 - 2014

Request and Answer:

Question 1

How many complaints of racism has your force received by (a) an alleged victim (b) a fellow officer or (c) a third party in respect of racist comments or behaviour by a member of your force? Please give figures for the 2013/2014 financial year.

Question 2

How many officers have been disciplined as a result of complaints of racism and what was the result of that disciplinary action?

Question 3

In relation to the last five incidents which fell within the remit of Q2 please state any words or phrases that were deemed to have been racist.

Answer

Section 17(5) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Police Service of Northern Ireland, when refusing to provide such information (because the cost of compliance exceeds the appropriate limit) to provide you the applicant with a notice which states that fact.

It is estimated that the cost of complying with your request for information would exceed the "appropriate costs limit" under Section 12(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, which is currently set by the Secretary of State at £450 (18hrs).

The Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland is responsible for investigating all complaints made against police or 'designated staff members' by or on behalf of members of the public, of which there are around 3000 complaints received annually.

Whilst Discipline Branch, Service Improvement Department receive notification from the Police Ombudsman of these complaints, a central record is not maintained. To retrieve the requested information for one year would entail a manual examination of over 3000 forms and it has been estimated that to do this would take approximately 50 hours to extract this information therefore massively exceeding the 'appropriate cost limit'.

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this letter should be considered as a Refusal Notice, and the request has therefore been closed.

You may wish to submit a refined request in order that the cost of complying with your request may be facilitated within the 'appropriate limit'. In compliance with Section 16 of the Act, I have considered how your request may be refined to bring it under the appropriate limit. Subject to any exemptions that may apply, Discipline Branch can provide the number of police officers disciplined as a result of a complaint allegation of racism in 2013/14, and the disciplinary sanction imposed, so if this alone was requested the response would not be over cost.

Submission of a refined request would be treated as a new request, and considered in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, including consideration of relevant Part II exemptions.

By way of providing further assistance, The Police Ombudsman's website publishes data relating to complaints, <http://www.policeombudsman.org/Statistics-and-Research>

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 this 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.