



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2016-00230

Keyword: Organisational Information/Governance

Subject: Social Media Complaints

Request and Answer:

Question 1

The number of complaints the Police Service of Northern Ireland received from the public about their use of social media between 2010 and 2015 and details of the related incidents.

Answer

Your request for information has now been considered. In respect of Section 1(1)(a) of the Act I can confirm that the Police Service of Northern Ireland does hold information to which your request relates. The decision has been taken to disclose the following.

Searches performed by the PSNI Discipline Branch, show that between 2010 and 2015 there have been a total of 9 complaints made by members of the public in relation to the use of social media by the PSNI as an organisation, or in relation to individual police officer's use of social media. The details of the incidents are provided below,

- One incident related to a member of the public complaining about language used by a police officer on their personal Facebook account.
- Two complaints objected to PSNI Facebook coverage regarding a specific incident.
- One complaint was in relation to the posting of photos on PSNI Facebook page.
- One complaint was in relation to comments made about upcoming elections.
- One complaint objected to the language used in the 'Without Consent' campaign on PSNI Facebook page.
- One complaint objected to the language and tone used in reporting a theft incident.
- One complaint stated that PSNI Facebook page reported the West Belfast community in a poor light.
- One complaint objected to information provided on PSNI Facebook regarding bars adhering to licensing laws

Question 2

The number of staff in the Police Service of Northern Ireland who were disciplined for their use of social media between 2010 and 2015, what this disciplinary action was, and the incident it was in relation to.

Answer

During the requested time period, 10 police officers have been disciplined for using social media in a manner that potentially breached the PSNI Code of Ethical Standards, 9 of these police officers received 'advice & guidance' or 'management discussion' and 1 police officer received a fine. The nature of these incidents was either the posting of inappropriate comments on Facebook, inappropriate comments on Twitter, unprofessional language on Facebook, unauthorised posting of police information on Facebook, or alleged bullying on Facebook.

Question 3

The number of staff who are obligated to use social media as part of their role in the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

Answer

There is no obligation placed on any PSNI employee to use social media as part of their role. However, the Police Service of Northern Ireland has approximately 200 employees who have the ability to engage on social media channels as part of their role. However operational requirements take priority and posting to social media will be completed as and when it is possible.

Question 4

The amount of money spent on social media training between 2010 and 2015 in the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

Answer

There is no information held on the amount of money the PSNI has spent on social media training. The training provided to PSNI officers is delivered by District Training teams as part of their ongoing in-house training and so is not individually costed.

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.