



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: FOI-2022-01882

Keyword: Organisational Information Police/Staff Misconduct and Complaints

Subject: Officers Investigated For Misconduct Via WhatsApp/Social Media

Request and Answer:

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

Request Number 1

The number of police officers that have been investigated for their conduct in text messages, on WhatsApp and/or other social media sites in the calendar years of 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and available information for 2022.

Answer

The following number of officers have been investigated by PSNI for allegations of misconduct relating to text messages and use of social media:

2017 – 6 Officers
2018 – 6 Officers
2019 – 15 Officers
2020 – 34 Officers
2021 – 12 Officers
2022 (to date) – 13 Officers

It should be noted that some investigations may have involved multiple officers, therefore the number of officers investigated will not necessarily equate to the number of incidents reported to PSNI.

Request Number 2

For each recorded case can you provide details of the incidents that led to formal and informal sanctions, and the outcome of that action please.

Answer

The following incidents have led to either formal or informal sanctions:

Please note that the below incidents are only the ones that resulted in either formal or informal sanctions. Any investigation recorded above that is not included below are investigations that did not result in any form of sanctions.

2017

Inappropriate Twitter Posts
Twitter and Text Messages Causing Harassment
Inappropriate Post in WhatsApp Group
Inappropriate Twitter Posts
Inappropriate Twitter Posts
Inappropriate Twitter Posts

2018

Inappropriate Facebook Post
Sending Extreme Pornography Via WhatsApp Group
Facebook and Text Messages Causing Harassment
Inappropriate Facebook Posts

2019

Sharing Inappropriate Video Via WhatsApp Group
Inappropriate WhatsApp Video
Inappropriate Facebook Posts
Inappropriate Facebook Posts
Inappropriate Facebook Posts
Inappropriate Facebook Posts
Inappropriate Facebook Posts
Inappropriate Facebook Posts
Text Messages Causing Harassment
Sharing of Confidential Information Via WhatsApp
Recording and Sharing of Inappropriate Video Via WhatsApp
Recording and Sharing of Inappropriate Video Via WhatsApp
Inappropriate Facebook Posts

2020

Inappropriate Facebook Post
Inappropriate Sharing of Information Via WhatsApp
Inappropriate Twitter Posts
Inappropriate Facebook Posts
Inappropriate Twitter Posts
Inappropriate Social Media Activity
Sending Unsolicited Sexualised Messages Via WhatsApp
Inappropriate Sharing of Video Via WhatsApp
Inappropriate Sharing of Video Via WhatsApp
Inappropriate Sharing of Video Via WhatsApp
Inappropriate Sharing of Video Via WhatsApp
Inappropriate Twitter Posts
Sharing of Inappropriate Messages in WhatsApp Group
Sharing of Inappropriate Messages in WhatsApp Group
Sharing of Inappropriate Messages in WhatsApp Group
Sharing of Inappropriate Messages in WhatsApp Group
Sharing of Inappropriate Messages in WhatsApp Group

2021

Recording and Sharing of Inappropriate Video on WhatsApp Group
Use of Social Media to Attempt Sexual Communication With a Child
Inappropriate Facebook Post
Sending Text Messages Causing Harassment

Inappropriate Twitter Post
Inappropriate WhatsApp Messages

2022

Inappropriate Twitter Post
Inappropriate Twitter Post

The outcomes of these incidents were as follows:

2017

Written warning x 1
Management Action x 5

2018

Written warning x 2
Management Action x 2

2019

Final written warning x 1
Written warning x 2
Management Action x 10

2020

Dismissed without notice x 1
Dismissed with notice x 2
Written warning x 1
Management Action x 13

2021

Dismissed without notice x 1
Management Action x 5

2022

Management Action x 2

We expect the highest standards of professionalism and integrity from all of our police officers and staff both on duty and off duty, in accordance with the standards contained in the Police Service of Northern Ireland's Code of Ethics. Breaches of the law and the Code will be thoroughly investigated and robustly dealt with in accordance with the procedures laid out in our Conduct Regulations.

Anyone who suspects a member of our Service of any potential misconduct is encouraged to report their concerns to us, or to the office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland. Members of the public can be assured that the matter will be thoroughly investigated.

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 Corporate Information Branch, 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 Corporate Information Branch, 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 remain dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you may make a complaint to the Information Commissioner's

Office, under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, 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', or use the ICO self-service portal available at www.ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/officialinformation-concerns-report/official-information-concern/

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 their discretion.

Please be advised that PSNI replies under Freedom of Information may be released into the public domain via our website @ www.psnj.police.uk

Personal details in respect of your request have, where applicable, been removed to protect confidentiality.