

Keeping People Safe



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: FOI-2021-02709

Keyword: Complaints/Discipline

Subject: Inappropriate Use of Social Media

Request and Answer:

Your request for information has now been considered. In respect of Section 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), we can confirm that the Police Service of Northern Ireland does hold information to which your request relates. The decision has been taken to provide you with the information you seek. PSNI is however withholding the detail of information you seek in request 3 under section 31 (1) (g) and section 40 (2) of the FOIA. PSNI has set out its reasons for this below and provided links to the Information Commissioner's Office guidance which was followed in the consideration of this request.

Request Number 1

Please provide details of how many officers have been investigated for inappropriate use of social media since 2018.

Answer

A total of 78 officers have been investigated for inappropriate use of social media since 2018.

Request Number 2

Please break down the figures by year.

Please include WhatsApp in this, as well as Facebook, twitter and other social media platforms.

Answer

This is broken down by year as follows:

- 2018 – 6 Officers
- 2019 – 20 Officers
- 2020 – 46 Officers
- 2021 up to 26th November 2021 – 6 Officers

Request Number 3

Please provide details of: the nature of the allegations against the officer(s), please give as much detail as possible.

Answer

You have sought information seeking details for the 'nature of allegations'. PSNI hold this information

but the specificity of these allegations are exempt under section 40 of the FOIA as it relates to information which is capable of identifying individuals as well as information which relates to investigations. This is exempt under section 31(1) (g) as it is information held by PSNI to ascertain whether any conduct is improper and part of an investigation file. Section 31 (1) carries a public interest test. PSNI considered that whilst there is a public interest in transparency of PSNI's investigative work, this is outweighed by the public interest in ensuring the integrity of PSNI investigations. PSNI considers the public interest favours upholding the exemption in regard to the detail of these allegations. PSNI considered the guidance issued by the Information Commissioner's Office which relates to these exemptions in regard to 'personal data' and information held for 'law enforcement' reasons. These can be accessed on the ICO website at www.ico.org.uk

PSNI can however confirm that all of the allegations relate to inappropriate use of social media.

Request Number 4

The rank of the officer(s) involved

Answer

The rank of the officers are as follows:

- Constable – 65
- Sergeant – 10
- Inspector – 2
- Chief Inspector - 1

Request Number 5

The outcome of the investigation - eg. officers dismissed/given a written warning

Answer

The outcome of the investigations are as follows:

- Written Warning – 5
- Management Action – 28
- Resigned – 1
- No Further Action – 10
- Final Written Warning – 2
- Performance – 1
- Dismissed With Notice – 1
- Dismissed Without Notice – 1

Please note that as a number of investigations are ongoing, they have not been included as the investigations are not concluded.

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.psnipolice.uk

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