

6th May 2020

Freedom of Information Request - Reference No: 20201006

REQUEST

Under the Freedom of Information Act, and within the legal timeframe, can you please tell me:

- 1. The total number of police officers disciplined for conduct on social media from January 1, 2016 to April 10, 2020?***
- 2. And the total number of complaints regarding their conduct over that period?***
- 3. Can you please tell me what kind of disciplinary action they received - was it taken to a misconduct hearing, or were they just reprimanded?***
- 4. And what social media sites were they on?***
- 5. Also, what were the offences? What kind of things did they write/post?***

Were the disciplinaries in relation to their personal accounts or officer-run profiles such as roads policing unit accounts

RESPONSE

I approached our Professional Standards Department for assistance with your request. The Performance Development Team Leader has provided the following data for your request.

- 1. The total number of police officers disciplined for conduct on social media from January 1, 2016 to April 10, 2020?***

3 officers were disciplined for conduct on Social media during the last 4 years.

- 2. And the total number of complaints regarding their conduct over that period?***

1 complaint

- 3. Can you please tell me what kind of disciplinary action they received - was it taken to a misconduct hearing, or were they just reprimanded?***

1 x resigned prior to attending a meeting

1 x dismissed without notice at misconduct hearing

1 x received written warning at misconduct hearing

In respect of any further information:

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires South Yorkshire Police, when refusing to provide such information (because the information is exempt), to provide you the applicant with a notice which:

- a. states that fact,
- b. specifies the exemption in question and
- c. states (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies.

The following exemption applies to the disclosure of the information:

Section 40 (2) – Personal Information

However, for clarity, I will explain my rationale for engaging this exemption. Section 40(2) provides that information is exempt if it is the personal data of someone other than the applicant and disclosure would breach any of the data protection principles. The term 'personal data' means data that relates to a living individual who can be identified.

A Freedom of Information request is not just published to the requestor, but also to the world as well. Although not explicitly naming individuals, the cumulative effect of a full disclosure of all the details requested into specific complaints may lead to the identification of those involved ie not only the person subject of the complaint, but potentially the person(s) who made the complaint. A full disclosure would infringe the first Data Protection Principle, in that it would be 'unfair'.