

Grievances by officers against Police Scotland double in 12 months

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The number of grievances made by police officers to single force bosses in the last year has doubled, new figures have shown.

In 2016/17, 29 officers lodged formal complaints with Police Scotland, compared to just 14 the previous year, and seven in 2014/15.

And when the statistics include grievances submitted by other staff, the total number for last year increases to 59, which is 10 more than in 2015/16 and considerably higher than the 32 made three years ago.

The statistics were obtained by the Scottish Conservatives through Freedom of Information.

Shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said the figures pointed to a decrease in morale among officers as Police Scotland continues to be hit by negative publicity.

The organisation has been criticised heavily for a lack of transparency and accountability, particularly in relation to the Scottish Police Authority, culminating in the departure of its chair Andrew Flanagan and accusations of bullying and secrecy.

There have also been concerns about police on the frontline being stretched, and officers forced to “back fill” to make up for shortages in other departments.

Bosses said reasons for lodging a formal grievance included bullying and harassment, change of work location, the behaviour of a line manager or organisational change.

However, it could not provide an exact breakdown of complaint topics.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:

“This doubling of grievances goes to show how morale is suffering at Police Scotland.

“A police officer is unlikely to make a formal complaint lightly, and each of these has to be taken extremely seriously.

“Police Scotland is only a young organisation, but already the trend seems to be for both officers and staff to be more likely to find cause for complaint.

“The Scottish Government has to reflect on these findings carefully.

“We cannot afford for mood among our officers to sink any lower – we need them to keep our communities safe.

“They take risks most of us never have to think about, and deserve at the very least to be happy at their work.”

Below are the number of grievances lodged in Police Scotland in the last three years:

2014/15

Police officers – 7

Police staff – 25

Total – 32

2015/16

Police officers – 14

Police staff – 35

Total – 49

2016/17

Police officers – 29

Police staff – 30

Total – 59