

Misconduct cops quit the force

A police officer who engaged in “sexual communications with a child” was one of eight rogue cops who left the force ahead of gross misconduct hearings.

A dozen Police Scotland officers were scheduled to face gross misconduct hearings between July and December.

Eight resigned ahead of their hearings while a ninth officer was sacked in relation to the “protection of animals and associated criminality” while off duty.

Police Scotland declined to divulge the nature of the allegations against the officer or whether the animals involved were domestic pets or wildlife.

Three other officers received written warnings, two of them final, after facing the most serious disciplinary charges between July and December.

Among the litany of career-ending charges were cocaine abuse, domestic assault, “unwanted sexualised contact” towards previous partners, threatening a member of the public while off duty, theft and excessive force.

A Police Scotland conduct report states that one officer quit prior to facing bosses at a gross misconduct hearing in relation to “inappropriate sexual communications with a child”. The officer pleaded guilty at court.

The report says: "Police Scotland has clear responsibilities for safeguarding children and young people and there is no justification for causing harm to those who are the most vulnerable in our society.

"This behaviour will not be tolerated by the organisation and anyone committing offences against children or young persons will be dealt with swiftly and robustly."

According to the report, an officer resigned ahead of a disciplinary hearing after facing claims of domestic assault, and verbal abuse towards their spouse. The officer pleaded not guilty at court and the trial was subsequently abandoned.

The report says: "Tackling domestic offending is a priority for Police Scotland regardless of who the perpetrator is. The significant impact domestic offences have on those involved is undeniable as is the harm caused by domestic offenders.

"There is no place in Police Scotland for persons alleged to have committed such offences."

Another cop resigned rather than face the music on charges related to "coercive and controlling behaviour and unwanted sexualised contact towards previous partners".

Threatening behaviour towards a member of the public while off-duty led to another officer resigning and pleading guilty at court before being admonished.

An allegation of theft led to an officer resigning ahead of their hearing and they pleaded guilty at court.

Two officers resigned prior to attending gross misconduct hearings relating to substance abuse. One of these was required to provide "with cause" samples but refused to comply. The same officer also engaged with members of the public in relation to the "procurement and consumption of controlled substances".

The other officer resigned prior to their hearing relating to substance misuse, after required samples tested positive for cocaine.

Another officer resigned prior to their hearing after being found guilty at court of an assault while on duty, involving the officer using excessive force by wielding their baton on a member of the public during an arrest.

A legislative crackdown means officers accused of gross misconduct will no longer be able to leave the force to dodge the outcomes of disciplinary hearings, with the aim of making the police complaints system "fairer, more transparent, accountable and proportionate".

When implemented, the Police (Ethics, Conduct and Scrutiny) (Scotland) Bill will mean that officers accused of gross misconduct who retire or resign from the service can still face misconduct proceedings.

Those found guilty will be placed on barred lists and prohibited from being re-employed in policing.

Justice Secretary Angela Constance said: "It is vital, however, that where any officer falls below the standards expected, there are robust and transparent mechanisms in place to hold them to account.

"This Bill will mean that officers accused of gross misconduct can still face proceedings even if they leave the service.

"The public and police officers also need a vetting system they can have full confidence in, and this Bill gives the Chief Constable more powers to remove officers and staff who cannot maintain their vetting clearance."



Angela Constance Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs

Police Scotland publishes gross misconduct outcomes on a quarterly basis to highlight standards of behaviour and to show the force will take action against officers who fail to meet them.

Chief Superintendent Helen Harrison said: "Criminality or misconduct by officers or staff damages public confidence and there is no place in policing for those who do not uphold our values.

"Where any officer or staff member falls below the standards expected, there are robust and transparent mechanisms in place to hold them to account.

"We have no ability under current legislation to prevent an officer from resigning or retiring during misconduct proceedings. Therefore, should an officer retire or resign, any outstanding misconduct proceedings will cease."