

Police probe into Merseyside officer's 'fake lieu days'

The sergeant went off sick when “discrepancies” in the number of rest days were detected, then took early retirement



Merseyside Police commissioner Jane Kennedy

A Merseyside police officer was allowed to take early retirement rather than face an investigation into allegations she falsely claimed thousands of pounds in pay for days she never worked.

The sergeant, who worked in the elite Force Operational Crime Unit – responsible for investigating sophisticated frauds – went off sick when “discrepancies” in the number of rest days were detected, then took early retirement

Police sources said the number of days off that were to be looked at by the investigation was around 30 during the last year.

Merseyside Police Commissioner Jane Kennedy said she would be holding talks with Chief Constable Jon Murphy to see how they could ensure that staff were not able to “exploit” their “generous” terms and conditions and evade discipline – which could see them stripped of their pension entitlements if found to have committed any wrongdoing.

She said she understood people in Merseyside would be “deeply unhappy” with the situation.

The Police Federation, which represented the officer, said the sergeant was close to retirement age and the Force said she would not get her full pension because of the

decision to go early.

Tony Barton, who represented the officer, said the sergeant told him she could have explained the discrepancies in her time off.

He added it was important to remember the misconduct allegation had not been substantiated.

“This came up at the time she was due to retire. She was served with a notice with the allegations in, but decided to retire at that time.”

Under the current system, police officers are able to retire younger than most other public servants if they have put in 30 years service, meaning many are able to retire in their 50s.

They are rarely blocked from doing so, and usually only if they are suspended, sources told the ECHO.

And even in those cases, it is more likely that the complainant will be a member of the public, rather than an internal whistleblower, as is believed to be the case with the officer’s time off discrepancies.

Commissioner Kennedy said: “In general terms, I believe people in Merseyside are deeply unhappy when public servants appear to evade disciplinary proceedings by exploiting the deservedly generous employment protection that has been painstakingly negotiated by their trade unions.

“This is true of police officers and staff too. I am committed to working closely with the Chief Constable to ensure all disciplinary procedures are fair and transparent and protect the public purse.

“I cannot comment on individual cases, but I am satisfied due process has taken place and I will be reviewing all employment procedures in the coming months.”

The officer retired on August 11.

A Merseyside Police spokesman said: “In June 2013 it was noted that there were discrepancies in the number of rest days accrued by an officer.

“Enquiries were made into the matter and the officer was subsequently subject of a misconduct investigation.

“The officer has since taken early retirement.”

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