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1,000 staff punished

Almost 1,000 Prisons Department staff were cautioned or punished for disciplinary offences in 1978.

A report covering the working of the department during the year reveals that 139 officers, 831 other ranks, and 17 civilian employees were on the carpet.

Their offences ranged from

using unnecessary force on prisoners to borrowing money from a subordinate officer.

The statistics also reveal that 36 people were dismissed, and another five recommended for dismissal.

Other punishments range upwards from a caution, to a forfeiture of pay and a severe reprimand.

A total of 987 punishments were meted out to Prisons Department staff.

The most popular offences were neglect of duty, absence without leave and late arrival for duty or parades.

Among the more unusual offences, each committed by only one person, were divulging secret information, communicating with an ex-prisoner, or relative or friend of a prisoner or ex-prisoner, and being unfit for duty because of drink or drugs.

The annual report also shows that the department operated at well below its established staffing level during 1978, the figures for which are the most recent available.

The total number of staff at the end of the year was 3,990, compared with an establishment of 4,242.

The report blames overcrowding and inadequate facilities at the Staff Training Institute in Stanley.

"Many necessities required for the staff in basic skills are still lacking," the report says.

"This situation will not be remedied until the planned extension of the institute has been completed."