



Our Ref: 003077/20

Your Ref:

Address Correspondence to: Information Management

Date 08 October 2020

Freedom of Information Act 2000

I write further to your request for information received 16/09/2020.

I note you seek access to the following information:

- 1. The number of cases or allegations against individuals received by your force from so-called 'paedophile hunter' or 'paedophile vigilante' groups from 2010 up until the present day (15/10/20) – broken down by year*
- 2. The number of these cases or allegations which led to a prosecution being launched, and how many of these prosecutions resulted in a conviction – again broken down by year*
- 3. How many of these cases or allegations include reference to 'QAnon', 'Carl Beech', 'Epstein', 'Pizzagate' or other popular conspiracy theories within the text of the investigation*
- 4. The release of any policy or internal briefing or guidance document relating to interactions between your force and members of so-called 'paedophile hunter' or 'paedophile vigilante' groups*

Following receipt of your request, searches were conducted within Leicestershire Police to locate information relevant to your request.

Your request for information has now been considered and I am able to supply the below information you have requested.

Q1

Year	Total
2010	0
2011	0
2012	0
2013	9
2014	5
2015	13
2016	1

2017	8
2018	24
2019	16
2020 (to 15/09/2020)	15

Q2.

Year	Charged	Summoned/Postal Requisition	Alternate Offence Charged	Total
2010	0	0	0	0
2011	0	0	0	0
2012	0	0	0	0
2013	0	1	0	1
2014	1	0	0	1
2015	4	0	0	4
2016	0	0	0	0
2017	3	0	0	3
2018	4	4	0	8
2019	1	3	1	5
2020	3	0	0	3

Q3

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires Leicestershire Constabulary, 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.

Under this legislation, there is a presumption that a Public Authority will firstly confirm or deny that information is held, and then disclose what is held unless an exemption applies.

However, on this occasion I am not required to confirm or deny that information is held as the obligation imposed by Section 1 (1) (a) of the legislation does not apply by virtue of the following exemption:

Section 40 (5) – Personal Information

(5)The duty to confirm or deny—

(b)does not arise in relation toinformation if or to the extent that either—

(i)the giving to a member of the public of the confirmation or denial that would have to be given to comply with section 1(1)(a) would (apart from this Act) contravene any of the data protection principles

I can confirm, pursuant to s1(1)(a) of FOIA that this Force does hold some of the information you have requested.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires Leicestershire Constabulary, 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 exemption(s) applicable relate to your request are as follows:

- Section 31 – Law Enforcement

Reason for Decision

You have asked for a wide range of information to be disclosed. As you have requested the information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 consideration has to be given to the fact that the legislation is applicant blind. As a result, any disclosure has to be treated as if it was being sent to the public at large as opposed to a specific individual when considering the harm in disclosure.

I am satisfied that the above exemption are engaged on this occasion and that some of the information you have requested is not suitable for release under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

I will now turn to the application of these exemptions to your request in order to provide the reasoning behind my decision.

Section 31 is a prejudice based, qualified exemption and there is a requirement to articulate the harm that would be caused as well as carrying out a public interest test.

Public Interest Test

The public interest is not what interests the public, but what will be of greater good if released to the community as a whole. It is not in the public interest to disclose information that may compromise Leicestershire Police's ability to fulfil its core functions. Detailed information pertaining to tactics, resources and intelligence used do not become public knowledge thereby rendering them ineffective.

Section 31 – Evidence of Harm

Under the Act, we cannot, and do not request the motives of any application for information. We have no doubt that the vast majority of requests made under the Act are legitimate.

However, in disclosing information to one applicant, we are expressing a willingness to provide it to anyone in the world. This means that a disclosure to a genuinely interested and concerned person automatically opens it up for a similar disclosure, including those who would use the information to gain an advantage over the police.

In considering whether or not this information should be disclosed, consideration has been given to the potential harm that could be caused by disclosure and the impact on the process of law enforcement.

Furthermore, release of some of the information, tactical information, may demonstrate how we investigate crimes of this nature. To release this information into the public domain would therefore clearly impact on our law enforcement capabilities with regards to future cases.

Section 31 – Considerations favouring disclosure

There is a public interest in disclosure of the requested information as it would allow the public to discuss the conduct of investigations by the Force and would therefore raise the Force's accountability. It would also aid transparency and allow any failings to be discussed in the public domain.

Section 31 – Considerations favouring non - disclosure

I am of the opinion that it is not in the public interest to disclose all of the information within the policy on this occasion. The information requested contains information that if disclosed, would reveal police tactics and evidence gathering techniques along with other information which is vital to Law Enforcement.

If all this was released into the public domain, it would allow persons to commit crime to be aware as to how this type of investigation is conducted. It would therefore give them an added advantage should they wish to impede a future investigation and would significantly weaken our law enforcement capabilities.

Q4

Please see the attachment to the Email

Please note: The Police Service do not work with, task or provide intelligence to on-line Child Abuse Activist Groups (OCAG). They are totally independent of the Police Service.

Conclusion

I believe that on balance it is **not** in the public interest to release all the information which you have requested on this occasion for the reasons stated above. I appreciate that this is not the decision you had hoped for but I must consider the wider position under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 which I feel necessitates the need to refuse your request under this legislation.

Leicestershire Police provides you the right to ask for a re-examination of your request under its review procedure. Letters should be addressed to Information Manager, Corporate Services Department at the above address. If you decide to request such a review and having followed the Force's full process you are still dissatisfied, then you have the right to direct your comments to the Information Commissioner who will give it consideration.

Yours sincerely

Freedom of Information Officer
Leicestershire Police

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