



Our Ref: 001471/21

Your Ref:

Address Correspondence to: Information Management

Date 02 June 2021

Freedom of Information Act 2000

I write further to your request for information received 29/04/2021.

I note you seek access to the following information:

1. *How many crimes were recorded under the Modern Slavery Act 2015, involving sexual exploitation, for each of the last 3 financial years?*
 - a. 2018-19
 - b. 2019-20
 - c. 2020-21
2. *How many of the crimes identified in Question 1, involved any potential victims recorded as being Romanian nationals, in each of the last 3 financial years?*
 - a. 2018-19
 - b. 2019-20
 - c. 2020-21
3. *How many of the crimes identified in Question 2 involved online adverts from Adult Services Websites? If necessary, please do a keyword search for the terms 'Adult Services Website', 'ASW', 'Adultworks' and 'Vivastreet'. Please give a figure per year for each of the last 3 financial years.*
 - a. 2018-19
 - b. 2019-20
 - c. 2020-21
4. *Of the crimes identified in Question 2, how many involved potential Romanian victims recorded as being under the age of 18? Please give a figure per year for each of the last 3 financial years. In each year, if possible please provide the age of the youngest potential victim.*
 - a. 2018-19
 - b. 2019-20
 - c. 2020-21

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 the information asked for is as follows: -

1. Leicestershire Police recorded the below numbers of crimes under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 involving sexual exploitation in the years requested:
 - a. 2018/19 – 19
 - b. 2019/20 – 43
 - c. 2020/21 – 10
2. Of the crimes in question 1, *ZERO* involved potential victims that were recorded as being Romanian nationals.
3. Leicestershire Police can neither confirm nor deny it holds any information relating to this question as detailed below.
4. N/A – See Q2.

The Leicestershire Police Service can neither confirm nor deny that it holds the information you requested in question 3 as the duty in s1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 does not apply, by virtue of the following exemptions:

- Section 23(5) Information relating to the Security bodies;
- Section 30(3) Investigations;
- Section 31(3) Law enforcement;

This should not be taken as conclusive evidence that any information that would meet your request exists or does not exist.

Section 23 is an absolute exemption which means that the legislators have identified that harm would be caused by release and there is no requirement to consider the public interest test.

Sections 30(3)), and 31(3) are qualified and require us to carry out a harm and public interest balancing test before they can be relied upon.

Overall Harm

Although it is acknowledged that there are investigations into modern slavery within the guise of sexual exploitation, the impact of confirming nor denying whether information relevant to this request, irrespective of what information is or isn't held, would be inappropriate as it would reveal the intricacies of police investigations into such matters.

In addition to confirm or deny whether any information is held relating to victims exploited through the involvement of Adult services websites, has the potential of undermining the flow of information (intelligence) into the Police Service and other outside agencies relating to the methodology within these types of offences. Confirmation or denial would also undermine both ongoing investigations and the Authorised Professional Practice for Information Management. This could in turn lead to police officers having to be removed from their frontline duties in order to increase manpower on an investigation.

Finally, sexual exploitation is not only a national problem but a global one. In order to ensure the police delivers effective law enforcement we liaise with various other national agencies to provide suitable support. Not only would police investigations be compromised, but any enquiries or investigations that other agencies may be undertaking would also be compromised.

Public Interest Considerations

Section 30

Factors favouring disclosure - Confirming or denying whether information exists relevant to this request would lead to a better informed general public by identifying that the police robustly investigate allegations made against a public authority for such serious matters. This fact alone may encourage individuals to provide intelligence in order to assist with investigations and would also promote public trust in providing transparency and demonstrating openness and accountability into whether the police are currently focusing their investigations.

The public are also entitled to know how public funds are spent, particularly in the current economic climate.

The issue of Modern Slavery and sexual exploitation is a highly emotive subject area often attracting high profile media and public interest connotations. Confirmation or denial that any information exists could provide reassurance to the general public.

Factors against disclosure - Modern-day policing is intelligence led and the police shares information with other law enforcement agencies as part of their investigative process. To confirm or not whether specific information is held about an ongoing investigation into sexual exploitation could hinder the prevention and detection of crime as well as undermine the partnership approach to investigations and law enforcement.

Should offenders take evasive action to avoid detection, police resources may well be diverted from frontline duties and other areas of policing in order to locate and apprehend these individuals. In addition, the safety of individuals and victims would be compromised.

Section 31

Factors favouring disclosure - It is recognised that there is a general public interest in the topic of Modern Slavery overall. The public interest favours disclosure of the requested information as it will allow the public to be better informed and brought into the discussion on law enforcement matters and preventative solutions.

Factors against disclosure - Confirming whether or not information is held in this case would suggest that the police fail to take their responsibility to protect the safety of individuals seriously. Public safety is of paramount importance and if offenders are provided with specific detail of ongoing police and other law enforcement agency investigations, undoubtedly offenders could use this to their advantage. In addition, public safety would be compromised as it may encourage offenders to carry out further crimes.

The police rely on information being supplied by the public. Irrespective of what information is or isn't held, by applying a substantive exemption(s) would indicate that information into sexual exploitation via online Adult services is held and may be actively under investigation. Such action would act as a deterrent any person who might otherwise provide intelligence to the force which would further undermine public safety, with repercussions that could hinder the prevention or detection of crime.

Balancing Test

The points above highlight the merits of confirming or denying that information pertinent to this request exists. The Police Service relies heavily on the public providing information to assist in criminal investigations and has a duty to protect and defend vulnerable individuals. The public has an expectation that any information they provide will be treated with confidence and in line with the APP Information Management Module. Anything which places that confidence at risk, no matter how generic, would undermine any trust or confidence individuals have in the Police Service.

In addition, the effective delivery of operational law enforcement takes priority and is at the forefront of the police to ensure the prevention and detection of crime is carried out and the effective apprehension or prosecution of offenders is maintained. This includes ensuring our relationship with other law enforcement agencies runs smoothly in the joint approach to multi-agency investigations.

Therefore, at this moment in time, it is our opinion that for these issues the balance test for confirming, nor denying, that information is held is not made out.

None of the above can be viewed as an inference that any other information does or does not exist.

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

Leicestershire Police in complying with their statutory duty under sections 1 and 11 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to release the enclosed information will not breach the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. However, the rights of the copyright owner of the enclosed information will continue to be protected by law.

Applications for the copyright owner's written permission to reproduce any part of the attached information should be addressed to The Information Manager, Leicestershire Police Headquarters, St. Johns, Enderby, Leicester LE19 2BX.