



Our Ref: 001479/21

Your Ref:

Address Correspondence to: Information Management

Date 03 June 2021

Freedom of Information Act 2000

I write further to your request for information received 30/04/2021.

I note you seek access to the following information:

1. *How many premises have been identified through intelligence or enforcement in your force area that would be defined as a brothel (i.e. two or more persons present for the purposes of prostitution) in the last 3 financial years, broken down by year?*
 - a. 2018-19
 - b. 2019-20
 - c. 2020-21
2. *When providing the information in question 1 please can you specify in relation to each brothel:*
 - a. Town/city in which it was identified
 - b. Number of persons identified as selling sex from the property
 - c. Nationality of persons identified as selling sex from the property
 - d. Whether the persons identified as selling sex were flagged as potential victims of trafficking
 - e. Whether the brothel or persons identified as selling sex were identified through, or linked to, any Adult Services Website advertisements

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: -

Please see attached spreadsheet containing information relating to your request, this is based on identified brothels that have been visited by Leicestershire Police.

The Leicestershire Police Service can neither confirm nor deny that it holds the information you requested in question 2e 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.

Evidence of Harm:

Confirming or denying that information is held in relation to brothels in specific areas, especially when identifying that criminal activity has originated from or involves such a specific category as adult services website advertisements, could give an overall picture within the UK of where the opportunity for such crimes are more or less prevalent and where such activity is known to, and investigated by the police. This could assist the understanding of criminals, including organised criminal gangs, on where detection of such activity is more or less likely to occur, allowing them to further their criminal activities. Confirming or denying information is held could therefore increase criminal activities in certain areas, and allow criminals to determine the areas subject to police attention in such areas, giving them opportunity to take steps to avoid being investigated and prosecuted.

Confirming or denying information is held now would identify the focus of investigative activity by specific forces over time. For example, by confirming no information is held now and later, upon receipt of the same request, confirming information was then held, would reveal there had been investigative activity undertaken by the police in relation to adult services websites. Over time, such disclosures, alongside other publicly available information could begin to reveal a pattern of investigative activity affording criminals the knowledge to adjust the way in which they operate to avoid detection. Account should always be taken of any harm likely to arise if the requested information were put together with other information, more commonly known as the mosaic effect.

Police forces rely heavily on information submitted for developing intelligence, both within force areas and on a national basis. Confirming or denying information is held by a specific force would indicate whether police awareness of such specific activity through intelligence has taken place in an individual area.

Public interest test – S31 Law Enforcement

Factors favouring complying with Section 1(1)(a) confirming that information is held

Confirming or denying whether a force has actively identified criminal activity via adult services website advertisements may lead to a better-informed public and reassuring them that robust and thorough investigations into such matters are undertaken. This would, through transparency, lead to an increase in public trust regarding such matters which may in turn lead to more information being submitted for intelligence gathering purposes.

Factors against complying with Section 1(1)(a) confirming or denying that information is held

To confirm or deny that the requested information is held could compromise law enforcement tactics which would hinder the forces' ability to prevent and detect crimes of this nature. Confirmation or denial information is held would allow criminals including organised criminal gangs to gain knowledge about capabilities

and investigative processes of police forces as a whole. Such criminals will be able to determine vulnerabilities and specifically target those force areas where they see a potential area to exploit which would compromise public safety.

Public Interest Test – S30 Investigations

Factors favouring complying with Section 1(1)(a) confirming that information is held

Confirming or denying that information exists relevant to this request would lead to a better-informed public improving their knowledge and understanding of how the Police Service investigate such crimes and the intelligence and utilise in order to detect it.

To confirm whether or not information is held would provide reassurance that the police conduct thorough investigations and that public funds are being spent appropriately.

Factors against complying with Section 1(1)(a) confirming or denying that information is held

Information relating to crimes involving organised criminal gangs is, by its very nature a sensitive and intelligence led area of police investigation. Under FOI there is a requirement to comply with Section 1(1)(a) and confirm what information is held. In some cases, it is that confirmation, or not, which could disclose facts harmful to investigations including covert operations. In such cases Leicestershire Police takes advantage of its ability under FOI legislation to, where appropriate, neither confirm nor deny that the information requested is or is not held.

In some cases, confirmation or denial information is held could identify where covert operations have taken place, some of which may be ongoing investigations. Information which could be used to undermine prosecutions or aid offenders is not in the public interest.

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

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