



Our Ref: 001972/21

Your Ref:

Address Correspondence to: Information Management

Date 27 July 2021

Freedom of Information Act 2000

I write further to your request for information received 09/06/2021.

I note you seek access to the following information:

Does your force provide training for officers to investigate complaints of online abuse? If yes, can you give an overview of the training given?

Does your force provide any internal guidance to police officers investigating cases involving communications sent via social media, other than the CPS Guidelines on prosecuting cases involving communications sent via social media? If yes, please could you provide an overview or a copy of the guidance?

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: -

Leicestershire Police provide training relating to social media as part of our investigations training, the detail relating to these is considered exempt by virtue of section 31.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires Leicestershire Police, 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

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.

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.

Effective policing requires the active participation of a wide number of agencies in order for it to be successful. As a result, during the course of training information is discussed and provided with the confidence that it will be treated confidentially. If a disclosure was made under the Act that broke this confidence, it would mean that information is not discussed and would severely impact on the process of law enforcement.

Furthermore, during the course of investigative training a wealth of sensitive tactical information as well as other information that would demonstrate how we investigate crimes is imparted to trainees. 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 and would therefore raise the Force's accountability. It would also aid transparency and allow any failings to be discussed in the public domain.

Disclosure would also enable the public to see how public funds are spent during the course of investigations training.

Section 31 – Considerations favouring non - disclosure

I am of the opinion that it is not in the public interest to disclose sensitive information that relates to specific areas of investigations training on this occasion. The information requested contains a wealth of information that if disclosed, would reveal police tactics and evidence gathering techniques along with other information which is vital to Law Enforcement.

Information such as Internal memoranda will contain detailed ways in which investigations are conducted. If this was released into the public domain, it would allow those like-minded 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.

Conclusion

I believe that on balance it is **not** in the public interest to release 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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