



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

FOI ref no: 14467

21st June 2022

Freedom of Information request: reference 14467 first notified to us by email on 7th June 2022.

Thank you for your recent request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, as detailed below:

*A count for the year 1st April to 31st March
(2018 -2019) (2019-2020) (2020-2021) (2021-22), of:*

*child abductions by a parent (Home Office classification 13/13),
child abductions by other persons (Home Office classification 13/2),
and kidnappings (Home Office classification 36/1) when the victim was aged under 18 at the time of the
offence.*

*child abductions where a parent abducted children to Northern Cyprus (AKA Turkish Republic of
Northern Cyprus)*

Staffordshire Police's response to your enquiry is as follows:

Staffordshire Police does hold the requested information.

*A count for the year 1st April to 31st March
(2018 -2019) (2019-2020) (2020-2021) (2021-22), of:*

*child abductions by a parent (Home Office classification 13/13),
child abductions by other persons (Home Office classification 13/2),
and kidnappings (Home Office classification 36/1) when the victim was aged under 18 at the time of the
offence.*

*child abductions where a parent abducted children to Northern Cyprus (AKA Turkish Republic of
Northern Cyprus)*

Please see the attached Excel spreadsheet 'FOI 14467 Child Abduction Offences Data'.

**The attached dataset relates to finalised cases only. There are a number of ongoing cases that
are still being investigated therefore I am applying the following exemptions;**

**Section 30(1)(a) Investigations and Proceedings Conducted by Public Authorities
Section 31(1)(a)(b) Law Enforcement
Section 40(2) Personal Information**

Section 30 is a qualified, class-based exemption and there is a requirement to conduct a public interest test.

Harm in Disclosure

Disclosure of information in relation to investigations would prejudice police activities for future investigations and would be likely to cause significant harm to the law enforcement function of Staffordshire Police. The police service is accountable in ensuring such matters are investigated and dealt with thoroughly and fairly. This could have an adverse effect on future investigations which could be compromised as it would allow those persons intent on committing crime to have an insight into how investigations are conducted and enable so called offenders to commit crime.

Factors Favouring Disclosure

The police service is charged with enforcing the law, preventing and detecting crime. The publication of the information may serve to increase the accountability and transparency of Staffordshire Police and may encourage public confidence in the effective conduct of police investigations and show how public funds are spent.

Factors Favouring Non-Disclosure

Disclosure of the requested information would prejudice how investigations are carried out in the future. This would hinder the prevention or detection of investigations and prejudice the legal process and therefore risk interference with evidence and could have a detrimental effect on future investigations. The right to a fair trial could be undermined.

Balance Test

I need to consider the public interest in the release of the information that has been refused under the above exemption. The police would not release any information that could hinder or prejudice an investigation. FOI is a disclosure to the world and not just an individual applicant. Once released, the information would be deemed suitable for disclosure without restriction. Therefore, the information would not only be available to you but also everyone else. It is for these reasons that it is decided that the requested information is withheld.

Section 31 is a qualified prejudice-based exemption and is subject to a public interest test.

Overall Harm

Any disclosure under FOI is a disclosure to the world and not just to the individual making the request. To disclose a statistic which would reveal specific details of investigative activity into these offences would undermine the smooth delivery of operational law enforcement as there is potential for community unrest to occur, as well as unrest within family members. Furthermore, disclosure may reveal identification or misidentification of victims which could lead to further offences occurring as well as the potential for victims being removed from their families against their will.

Factors favouring Disclosure

In this case disclosure of the information would provide openness and transparency relating to this type of offending.

Factors favouring Non-Disclosure

When the current or future law enforcement role of the force may be compromised by the release of information, the effectiveness of the force will be reduced. In this case, for the reasons

outlined in the evidenced harm, the effectiveness of dealing with crimes such as child abduction would compromise law enforcement. To disclose data which could cause family unrest would not be in the public interest and would impact on frontline policing, which is often over stretched. Although there is currently a national ongoing major recruitment of police officers, this will not impact on the day to day policing establishment for quite some time.

The personal safety of individuals, including both the general public and police officers and staff, is of paramount importance to the Police Service and must be considered in respect of every release. As stated within the harm a disclosure under Freedom of Information is a release to the world and any disclosure which compromises an individual(s) health and safety is not in the public interest.

Balance Test

As always the Freedom of Information Act has a presumption of disclosure, unless when balancing the competing public interest factors the prejudice to the community outweighs the benefits. In this case, there is an argument for disclosure, inasmuch as the public have a right to know that this type of criminal offending is appropriately dealt with by the Police Service. However, this must be balanced against the negative impact these disclosures can make. If disclosing information about child abduction undermines the apprehension of offenders then it cannot be in the public interest. The health and safety of any individual is of paramount importance to the Police Service as a whole.

In this case taking into account the negatives identified above, they outweigh any tangible community benefit and therefore the balance does not favour disclosure at this time.

Section 40(2) Personal Information

To release personal or third party information held by Staffordshire Police, would breach the data protection principles; namely –

- Data is lawfully and fairly processed.
- Processed in line with an individual's rights.
- Data is secure.

Personal and third party information cannot be released under the Freedom of Information Act.

Disclosure under Freedom of Information is a release of information to the world in general and not an individual applicant.

Please note that these figures have been provided to the best of our ability, subject to the limitations of current recording protocols and systems/software. Additional crimes may have been recorded during these timescales but are awaiting finalisation and input onto these systems and would not be present within this dataset.

Every effort is made to ensure that the figures presented are accurate and complete. However, it is important to note that data is extracted from multiple sources, developed for specific policing purposes, for which data extraction methods have not been specifically designed to directly correlate with the terminology of this request. Therefore the data presented is subject to the inaccuracies and idiosyncrasies inherent in any large scale recording system.

As a consequence, care should be taken in the interpretation and presentation of this data, so as to not misrepresent the whole or any part of the data disclosed.

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within two months of the date of receipt of this email and should be addressed to:

foi@staffordshire.police.uk

Or by Post to:

Central Disclosure Unit
Staffordshire Police HQ
PO Box 3167
Stafford
ST16 9JZ

Please remember to quote the reference number in any future communications.

Freedom of Information
Central Disclosure Unit

Produced by Staffordshire Police
for FOI 14467