

14 August 2024

FOI Ref 16641

Request - You asked us the following:

Apostasy is defined as leaving or changing your religion or belief. The right to change religion or belief is protected under the Human Rights Act, Article 9, Freedom of thought conscience and religion.

- CPS has confirmed that religious hate crime laws include crimes against apostates, within the 'Definition of a religious group'. Hate crime statistics for England and Wales do not include apostasy as a category, and therefore numbers are unknown, however crimes against apostates could possibly be recorded as 'no religion', 'unknown' or 'other'. College of Policing guidance confirms that forces can "extend their local policy response to include hostility against other groups or personal characteristics, they believe are prevalent in their area or that are causing concern to their community." Therefore it is possible that forces hold local records of hate crime towards apostates.
- The purpose of my research is to understand the experiences of apostates, and how hate crime, domestic abuse and other relevant legislation can protect and support them. An online summary of my research is linked here.
- I am sending this FOI request to all police forces in England and Wales to benchmark national practice. Following this I would like to hold interviews with approximately 10 police forces, (ideally specialist officers in hate crime, domestic abuse, honour abuse) to collect more detailed data on how crimes against apostates may be handled. If your force would like to take part, please provide contact details and I will provide further information.

FOI questions

1. Does your force record crimes against apostates, within formal or informal records?
2. If yes, please provide data for the last 5 years, including the type of offence, the religion or belief of the perpetrator, and of the victim. Please detail any prosecuted cases including the outcome, and also No Further Action (NFA) cases, or any other relevant data.
3. Has leaving or changing religion or belief been recorded as a factor for any offences relating to; domestic abuse, coercive control or honour-based violence, or hate crimes against different protected characteristics eg sexual orientation? If yes, please provide data for the last 5 years.
4. Does your force have any formal or informal policy or operational guidance relating to crime against apostates? If yes please can you provide detail on which policies or operational guidance this is found in and provide a copy of the full text for relevant sections.

We received your request on 12/03/2024 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

Please find below our response.

Staffordshire Police holds the following requested information.

1. Does your force record crimes against apostates, within formal or informal records? – **Information held.**
2. If yes, please provide data for the last 5 years, including the type of offence, the religion or belief of the perpetrator, and of the victim. Please detail any prosecuted cases including the outcome, and also No Further Action (NFA) cases, or any other relevant data. – **No information held.**
3. Has leaving or changing religion or belief been recorded as a factor for any offences relating to; domestic abuse, coercive control or honour-based violence, or hate crimes against different protected characteristics eg sexual orientation? If yes, please provide data for the last 5 years. – **No information held.**
4. Does your force have any formal or informal policy or operational guidance relating to crime against apostates? If yes please can you provide detail on which policies or operational guidance this is found in and provide a copy of the full text for relevant sections. – **No information held.**

Please note that Staffordshire Police does have a procedure for Religious Hate Crime but nothing is mentioned within this procedure about apostates.

Staffordshire Police discloses/withholds the following information.

- 1. Does your force record crimes against apostates, within formal or informal records? – **Disclosed, apostate is not a marker used against any offence or crime within our crime/occurrence recording database.**

Next steps

You can ask us to review our response.

If you would like us to carry out a review of our response, please let us know within two months of the date of receipt of this email, review requests should be addressed to:

foi@staffordshire.police.uk

Or by Post to:

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



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

Freedom of Information
Central Disclosure Unit