

2 December 2024

FOI Ref 17545

Request - You asked us the following:

In light of your response, please proceed only with questions 3 and 4.

Original request:

This is a request under the Freedom of Information Act.

For context, this request is related to crimes of abuse linked to faith or belief as defined by the Metropolitan Police in the link below (the Met's definition is specially about children whereas I am looking at cases involving children and/or adults) - <https://www.met.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/caa/child-abuse/faith-based-abuse>. It states: "Abuse linked to faith or belief is where concerns for a (person's) welfare have been identified, and could be caused by, a belief in witchcraft, spirit or demonic possession, ritual or satanic abuse features; or when practices linked to faith or belief are harmful to a (person)."

Abuse linked to faith or belief is also defined here in this government national action plan - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175437/Action_Plan_-_Abuse_linked_to_Faith_or_Belief.pdf

For each calendar year 2021, 2022, 2023 and for the period 1st January 2024 to 28th November 2024, please could you tell me:

- 1) The number of cases of abuse linked to faith or belief (as defined above) that have been reported
- 2) A brief description of each case and the outcome if known (i.e. arrest, charge, on bail, no further action, etc)
- 3) The number of crime reports where the term "witch", or "witchcraft", or "demon", or "exorcism" is mentioned in the MO field of the crime report
- 4) A brief description of each reported crime from your answer to question 3) and the outcome if known (i.e. arrest, charge, on bail, no further action, etc)

We received your request on 02/12/2024 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

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

Staffordshire Police holds the requested information.

- 3) The number of crime reports where the term "witch", or "witchcraft", or "demon", or "exorcism" is mentioned in the MO field of the crime report – **Disclosed, please see accompanying file titled 'FOI 17545 Refinement of FOI 17543 Abuse Linked to Faith or Belief Data.PDF'**.

- 4) A brief description of each reported crime from your answer to question 3) and the outcome if known (i.e. arrest, charge, on bail, no further action, etc) – **Partially disclosed, please see accompanying file titled ‘FOI 17545 Refinement of FOI 17543 Abuse Linked to Faith or Belief Data.PDF’.**

The following exemption has been applied:

In accordance with Section 17(1) of the Freedom of Information Act, this letter represents a refusal notice for parts of this particular request.

- Section 40(2) Personal Information

Section 40(2) is an absolute exemption which means that there is no need to quantify the harm that may arise from the disclosure; neither is it subject to a public interest test.

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 this data has been provided to the best of our ability, subject to the limitation of current recording protocols and systems/software. Additional offences/incidents 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 data presented is accurate and complete. However, it is important to note that this has been 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.

Freedom of Information Request Appeals Procedure

1. Who Can Ask for a Review

Any person who has requested information from Staffordshire Police, which has been dealt with under the Freedom of Information Act, is entitled to complain and request an internal review, if they are dissatisfied with the response they received.



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2. How to Request a Review

Requests for review of a Freedom of Information request must be made in writing 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

The reference number, date of the request and details of why the review is being requested must be included. Requests for review should be brought to the attention of the Central Disclosure Unit within two months of the Force's response to the original FOI request.

3. Review Procedure

Receipt of a request for review will be acknowledged in writing. The review will be conducted by another Decision Maker who is independent from the original Decision Maker. The Central Disclosure Unit will set a target date for a response. The response will be made as soon as is practicable with the intention to complete the review within 20 working days. In more complex cases the review may take up to 40 working days.

The independent Decision Maker will conduct a review of the handling of the request for information and of decisions taken, including decisions taken about where the public interest lies in respect of exempt information where applicable. The review enables a re-evaluation of the case, taking into account the matters raised by the complaint.

4. Conclusion of the Appeal

On completion of the review the Independent Decision maker will reply to the complainant with the result of the review. If the complainant is still dissatisfied following the review they should contact the Information Commissioner to make an appeal. The Information Commissioner can be contacted via the following details:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

ICO Website for complaints link: <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/foi-and-eir-complaints/foi-and-eir-complaints/>

Freedom of Information



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Central Disclosure Unit

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