

7 November 2024

FOI Ref 17395

Request - You asked us the following:

I would like to know how many individuals were reported for a case of online abuse in the years 2022, 2023 and 2024 individually where the offence was committed by an individual under the age of 18 and those 18 and over. I would like this age breakdown provided separately.

I would also like to know the outcomes of the report - how many were charged - for both those offenders under the age of 18 and those 18 and over. If you cannot provide this additional information please just provide the other information I have requested.

Clarification received 22/10/2024:

In regard to my FOI, please consider the definition of online abuse as the below:

Online abuse defined as: death threats, cyber bullying, threats, sexual harassment, cyberstalking, emotional abuse, unsolicited sexual imagery and enticing violence or harm through online speech and comments.

We received your request on 22/10/2024 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.

- 1. I would like to know how many individuals were reported for a case of online abuse in the years 2022, 2023 and 2024 individually where the offence was committed by an individual under the age of 18 and those 18 and over. I would like this age breakdown provided separately. – **Disclosed, please see the accompanying file entitled 'FOI 17395 Online Abuse Data'.**
- 2. I would also like to know the outcomes of the report - how many were charged - for both those offenders under the age of 18 and those 18 and over. If you cannot provide this additional information please just provide the other information I have requested. – **Disclosed, please see the accompanying file entitled 'FOI 17395 Online Abuse Data'.**

Please be advised the data has been extracted from our crime/occurrence recording database, where an online flag has been applied. This data has been broken down by the stats classification and outcome.

Please note that there are 25 offences that are still being investigated so with regard to these cases we are citing Section 30(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Investigations conducted by Public Authorities.

These matters are still included within the dataset but they are marked '* s30 on-going ***'.**

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 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.

The above information has been withheld for the following reasons:

Several matters within the dataset provided currently remain ongoing at this time. Disclosure of further details relating to these occurrences at this time would prejudice police activities both for ongoing and future investigations, and would be likely to cause significant harm to the law enforcement function of Staffordshire Police and the administration of justice.

The following exemption has been applied:

- Section 30(1)(a)(b) – Criminal Investigations

Section 30 is qualified and prejudice-based and, as such, we are required to evidence the harm in disclosure and apply the public interest test.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring disclosure under Section 30(1)(a)(b)

Disclosure of the information would improve the public's knowledge and understanding of the investigatory process and, as all police investigations are publicly funded, would show how public funds are being spent.

Factors favouring non-disclosure under Section 30(1)(a)(b)

Disclosure of the requested information would prejudice how investigations are carried out in the future. Staffordshire Police is charged with enforcing the law, preventing and detecting crime and protecting the communities we serve. Any release of information relating to ongoing investigations could prejudice and undermine those investigations. The prevention and detection of such matters could therefore be hindered and therefore risk interference with evidence, which could have detrimental impact on future investigations. In addition, the right to a fair trial could be undermined.

Balance test

Disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act is a release of information to the world in general and not an individual applicant. Having considered the public interest factors we are required to determine



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whether on balance the factors favouring disclosure outweigh those which are against disclosure. It is our view that the factors favouring disclosure do not outweigh those which favor non-disclosure.

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

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

Freedom of Information
Central Disclosure Unit