

29 April 2025

FOI Ref 21279

Request - You asked us the following:

I would like to request the following information as a freedom of information request.

By 'paedophile hunter' I mean a group of people or individual who gather their own evidence of alleged paedophiles.

1. In how many cases was the evidence provided by 'paedophile hunters' admissible as evidence for each of the years 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024?
2. How many people were charged because of evidence supplied to the police from 'paedophile hunters' in each of the years 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024?
3. In how many cases were the evidence not admissible for each of the years 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024?
4. How many cases resulted in a mistrial because of evidence submitted from a 'paedophile hunter' for each of the years 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024?
5. What percentage of cases of the crime of meeting a child following sexual grooming involved evidence from a 'pedophile hunter' for each of the years 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024?

We received your request on 28/04/2025 and have processed this under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

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

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

The following exemption has been applied:

- Section 12(1) where the cost of compliance exceeds the appropriate limit. Section 12(1) does not oblige a public authority to comply with a request for information if the authority estimates that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the prescribed limit'.

The above information has been withheld for the following reasons:

There is no method by which we can readily retrieve information from our systems to answer this request. For the time period requested, there have been in excess of 10,500 occurrences of child sex offences. In order to ascertain whether the investigation for each occurrence involved input from a 'paedophile hunter',



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

the record for each offence would require manual review. To extract this data would therefore require a very labour-intensive manual trawl through each record.

From dip sampling, it has been estimated that it would take approximately 5 minutes to review each record to answer this request, this would equate to over 875 hours. To achieve this task would therefore exceed the 18-hour time and cost threshold of the Freedom of Information Act by some considerable margin.

Advice and assistance

Section 16 of the Act places an obligation upon the Authority to provide advice and assistance, in order to comply with this obligation please see below.

Unfortunately, we cannot suggest a way in which your request could be simplified or pared down in order to bring it within the confines of the time and cost threshold.

In addition, Staffordshire Police do not hold conviction or court data. We would advise that you approach the Government HM Courts and Tribunals Service website.

Please find below links to previously disclosed HMCTS data and details upon how to submit a further Freedom of Information request to the Government HM Courts and Tribunals Service for this information.

https://www.gov.uk/search/transparency-and-freedom-of-information-releases?content_store_document_type=foi_release&organisations%5B%5D=hm-courts-and-tribunals-service

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-courts-and-tribunals-service>

Make a new request by using the details below:

FOI requests
Disclosure Team
Postal Point 10.38, Floor 10
102 Petty France
London
SW1H 9AJ
United Kingdom

Email: data.access@justice.gov.uk

Please be advised that all Freedom of Information request responses are published on the Staffordshire Police website although personal details are not included.

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.



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

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
Central Disclosure Unit