

17 June 2025

FOI Ref 21413

Request - You asked us the following:

1. Please tell me the number of recorded offences under s.15A of the Sexual Offences Act 2003, sexual communication with a child, (Home Office recording code 71/17) recorded from (and including) April 1st 2024 until (and including) March 31st, 2025.

2. Where possible I would like to know the age and gender of the victim, broken down into age groups: 11 and under, 12-15, 16 and over.

3. Please tell me the age and gender of the youngest victim.

4. Where possible I would like to know the total number of perpetrators linked to these offences.

5. Please tell me all the forms of communication (i.e. which social media or messaging platform such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Kik, TikTok etc.) that have been recorded as having been used in connection with recorded offences under s.15A of the Sexual Offences Act 2003, sexual communication with a child, from (and including) April 1st 2024 , until (and including) March 31st 2025.

6. How many offences, where the means of communication was known, took place on private messaging services?

Clarification received on 13/06/2025

Happy for you to only answer question 5 and leave question 6 if that adds complexity.

We received your request on 29/05/2025 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. Please tell me the number of recorded offences under s.15A of the Sexual Offences Act 2003, sexual communication with a child, (Home Office recording code 71/17) recorded from (and including) April 1st 2024 until (and including) March 31st, 2025. – **Disclosed, please see the accompanying file titled 'FOI 21413 Sexual Communication with a Child Offences Data'.**
- 2. Where possible I would like to know the age and gender of the victim, broken down into age groups: 11 and under, 12-15, 16 and over. – **Partially disclosed, please see the accompanying file titled 'FOI 21413 Sexual Communication with a Child Offences Data'. Please see the below exemption.**
- 3. Please tell me the age and gender of the youngest victim. – **Disclosed, please see the accompanying file titled 'FOI 21413 Sexual Communication with a Child Offences Data'.**

- 4. Where possible I would like to know the total number of perpetrators linked to these offences.
– **Disclosed, please see the accompanying file titled 'FOI 21413 Sexual Communication with a Child Offences Data'.**
- 5. Please tell me all the forms of communication (i.e. which social media or messaging platform such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Kik, TikTok etc.) that have been recorded as having been used in connection with recorded offences under s.15A of the Sexual Offences Act 2003, sexual communication with a child, from (and including) April 1st 2024 , until (and including) March 31st 2025. – **Partially disclosed, please see the accompanying file titled 'FOI 21413 Sexual Communication with a Child Offences Data'. Please see the below exemption.**
- 6. How many offences, where the means of communication was known, took place on private messaging services? – **Question withdrawn.**

Please note that there are a number of offences that are still being investigated so with regard to these cases we are citing Section 30(1)(a)(b) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Investigations conducted by Public Authorities. These cases have been included in questions 1, 3 and 4 however with regards to a further breakdown for questions 2 and 5 these cases have been removed. Where the figures are above 0 but below 5 these have been marked as '*Less than 5' in the dataset as requested.

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.

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

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 this particular request.

- Section 30(1)(a)(b) – Criminal Investigations
- Section 30 is qualified and class based and, as such, we are required to apply the public interest test.
- 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.

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 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 favour non-disclosure.

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.

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:



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

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