

1 May 2025

FOI Ref 21152

Request - You asked us the following:

We are working towards an estimate of group-based contact child sexual exploitation. To do this we are counting the number of people who have been sentenced for such crimes that would fall into this category.

Under the Freedom of Information Act, would you be able to provide us with the number of cases in your area that have involved more than two people convicted of child sexual exploitation offences that have involved contact rather than just indecent images of children over the last 20 years? If possible can you provide these broken down by year?

Could you also provide names of significant operations in your area that have sought to bring people to justice for these types of crimes (equivalents of Stovewood, Bullfinch or Sanctuary in England) and any numbers for convictions secured from these investigations – again in the last 20 years?

We received your request on 31/03/2025 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. Prior to the introduction of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) as a specified crime type within the Serious Crime Act 2015, we have no method by which we can readily extract data from our systems to answer this request. Prior to this time, this type of crime would be recorded as any one of a number of sexual offences with no specific flags to denote CSE specifically; therefore, we would need to examine all sexual crimes recorded where the victim was under the age of 16 to determine whether it involved any behaviour that could be determined as exploitative.

Since the introduction of the specified CSE crime types in 2015 and the introduction of mandatory recording of such crimes, outlined in 2017, Staffordshire police have recorded upwards of 180 occurrences where a child based sexual exploitation qualifier has been applied and where more than one suspect has been identified. To determine the number of cases where a conviction was made, whether the crime was group based and whether the recorded offence formed part of an extended operation would require a very labour-intensive manual trawl through each record. This would take upwards of 30 hours to provide the



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requested information. Further to this, as outlined above, for offences occurring prior to 2015 we would need to examine all sexual crimes recorded where the victim was under the age of 16 to determine whether it involved any behaviour that could be determined as exploitative, whether a conviction was made, whether the crime was group based and whether the recorded offence formed part of an extended operation. Taking these offences into account, this would require the manual review of a further 3,590 occurrences. From dip sampling, it has been estimated that it would again take approximately 10 minutes to review each record to answer this request, this would equate to over 500 hours. To achieve this task would therefore exceed the 18-hour time and cost threshold of the FOI 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 can therefore recommend no method of refining your request to allow it to fall within the time constraints prescribed by the Act.

Conviction date is held by the Government HM Courts & Tribunals service, we would therefore also advise that you may wish to approach this organization for the data required.

Please find below links to the aforementioned HMCTS data website where details upon how to submit a further Freedom of Information request to this organization can be found. A further link has been provided to their previously published FOI releases and you may wish to view these before submitting your request.

Make an FOI request - [how to make a request](#).

Check [our previous releases](#) to see if we've already answered your question - [our previous releases](#)

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.

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



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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