

18th June 2019

Freedom of Information Request – Reference No:20191211

REQUEST

Q1) How many members of so-called paedophile hunting groups were arrested by your force in the listed years below for activities relating to “paedophile hunting”?

Q2) How many of those individuals in Q1 were charged by your force in the listed years below, and what were the charges in each case?

Please could I have the details for the calendar years 2016, 2017, and 2018.

RESPONSE

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires South Yorkshire Police, when refusing to provide such information (because the information is exempt), to provide you the applicant with a notice which:

- a. states that fact,
- b. specifies the exemption in question and
- c. states (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies.

The following exemption applies to the disclosure of the information:

Section 12 – Exemption where cost of compliance exceeds appropriate limit

Our Custody Handling System records Arrests by title, to further check details on the individual arrested would mean manually checking each arrest file, in this case to see if they were a member of a Paedophile Hunter Group.

So I approached our Crime Management Data Returns Administrator for assistance with your request. The CMS system and Connect System is used to record complaints or allegations of those matters, which the Home Office specify should be recorded as 'crimes'.

This system records by Offence, Victim and Details and Outcomes – it does not have a specific field/flag which identifies if an individual belongs to a so called Paedophile Hunter Group.

The Administrator advised:

there isn't an accurate way to extract data from crime systems to identify if an offender is a 'member of a so-called paedophile hunting group'.

Therefore to retrieve elements of information for this request would involve a manual search of each recorded crime to manually check if there is any mention within the text that the Offender was a member of a Group. This process would take much longer than 18 hours' work.

The Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004 provide that the cost limit for non-central government public authorities is £450. This must be calculated at the rate of £25 per hour, providing an effective time limit of 18 hours.

Guidance from the Information Commissioner to public authorities is that where one part of a request is reasonably estimated to exceed the appropriate limit then the authority is not obliged to consider or comply with the remainder of the request up to the point at which the appropriate limit has been reached. Please note point 30 of the below link:-

https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/1199/costs_of_compliance_exceeds_appropriate_limit.pdf