

9th October 2020

Freedom of Information Request - Reference No: 20202017

REQUEST

1. *The number of cases or allegations against individuals received by your force from so-called 'paedophile hunter' or 'paedophile vigilante' groups from 2010 up until the present day (15/10/20) – broken down by year*
2. *The number of these cases or allegations which led to a prosecution being launched, and how many of these prosecutions resulted in a conviction – again broken down by year*
3. *How many of these cases or allegations include reference to 'QAnon', 'Carl Beech', 'Epstein', 'Pizzagate' or other popular conspiracy theories within the text of the investigation*
4. *The release of any policy or internal briefing or guidance document relating to interactions between your force and members of so-called 'paedophile hunter' or 'paedophile vigilante' groups*

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

To retrieve 10 years of data to fulfil your request would firstly require us to check all calls, into our force through the Communication Centre to see if there were any callers making allegations of this type and mentioning any type of hunter group. This would amount to many thousands of calls to be checked as there is no single Incident Title that would cover this. We would then need to cross reference those calls, which fit the criteria to check if those lead to an investigation and what the outcome was.

This wouldn't take into account any investigations, calls or notes were information was received through other channels i.e. other investigations or offences or intel. There are a number of type of offences ie Sexual, Violence against a person or Drug Offences which due to their nature could involve Hunter Groups and would dealt with by a different departments.

In essence, to locate and retrieve the relevant data to fit the criteria of your request would seriously exceed the 18hr rule.

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

Although excess cost removes the force's obligations under the Freedom of Information Act, as a gesture of goodwill, I have supplied information, relative to your request, retrieved or available before it was realised that the fees limit would be exceeded. I trust this is helpful, but it does not affect our legal right to rely on the fees regulations for the remainder of your request neither does it bind South Yorkshire Police to any commitment that it will release information in such a manner in the future .

However, our Crime Management Systems record crimes the Home Office specify as 'crimes'. They are able to do a free text search within a couple of fields for example for 'paedophile hunter' or 'paedophile vigilante' This of course is reliant on the words being inputted and spelt correctly in the first instance. This may provide you with some useable data for your research.

The Crime Management Administrator has provided me with an Offence count on the enclosed spreadsheet of data and the following explanation of their search criteria:

Please find data attached and explanation below.

CONNECT data –

I have included a count of crimes recorded on CONNECT Crime where:

- *Initial MO contains 'Paedophile Hunter' or 'Paedophile Vigilante' OR Investigation Summary contains 'Paedophile Hunter' or 'Paedophile Vigilante'*
- *AND incident created date is between '05-Dec-2017' and '15-Sep-2020' (the day before we received the FOI request).*

(Note that the following spellings of paedophile were included in all searches: 'paedophile', 'pedophile', 'paedofile', 'pedofile').

I have included the Offence Type recorded and the disposal type, so the requestor can get the information they require.

CMS(ii) data –

I have included a count of crimes recorded on CMS(ii) where:

- *Text Report contains 'Paedophile Hunter' or 'Paedophile Vigilante'*
- *AND statistics date is between '01-Jan-2010' and '04-Dec-2017'*

(Note that the following spellings of paedophile were included in all searches: 'paedophile', 'pedophile', 'paedofile', 'pedofile').

I have included the Offence Type recorded and the disposal type, so the requestor can get the information they require.

Please note – We have extracted data from both crime systems if 'Paedophile hunter' or 'Paedophile Vigilante' is recorded within the free text circumstances of offence fields, however searching for keywords may not accurately identify all offences that are relevant to

the request due to spelling variations\errors, therefore results may not accurately reflect what is potentially recorded.

We have provided data to date 15th September 2020, however data for the month of September 2020 is not yet audited and therefore could change.