

13th April 2021

Freedom of Information Request - Reference No: 20210704

REQUEST

I would like to make the following request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Could you please tell me the number of Osman warnings issued by your force in the calendar years 2019 and 2020, each broken down by month?

RESPONSE

I can confirm South Yorkshire Police hold the information you seek regarding Osman warnings but I am unable to provide this to you in full.

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 40(2) – Personal Information
Section 31(1)(a)(b) - Law Enforcement
Section 38(1)(a)(b) – Health & Safety

Harm

The Police Service has an obligation to take all reasonable steps to protect a person whose life is in real and immediate danger from the criminal acts of another. SYP has previously released the number of Osman warnings on an annual basis, it is believed providing further detail or part year would be of use to those persons intent on causing serious harm to those individuals.

Overall considerations in favour of disclosure

The release of the information would allow greater public scrutiny leading to informed debate as to the effectiveness, or otherwise, of the Force's performance in the primary function of the protection of life and property.

Overall considerations in favour non-disclosure

South Yorkshire Police has previously released information in relation to the numbers of 'Osman Warnings' issued. This information is a Force level figure concerning total warnings issued per calendar year.

Releasing a further breakdown in this instance by month in conjunction with the year in which the warning was issued would undoubtedly lead to the drawing of meaningful conclusions as to the identity of that person, if not a positive identification. This risk of identification increases dramatically where the numbers of such people matching all the criteria are low. Such 'meaningful conclusions' would lead to an increased threat to the person to whom the warning had been issued. Such realisation may serve to motivate the aggressor to return to the original intention of inflicting serious injury.

ON BALANCE

The issue of a warning to an individual that his or her safety is under real and immediate threat is a relatively infrequent occurrence. The general numbers of such warnings per year within South Yorkshire Police are at such a level that individual cases can be 'cloaked' within figures at Force level, thereby ensuring that publication does not increase the already high level of risk or identification of individuals involved.

The process by which persons are warned exists to protect such persons from serious harm. Any release of information that would adversely impact upon this protection cannot be countenanced by South Yorkshire Police given the seriousness of the threat that necessitated the issue of the warning initially.

In all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

However, the following information can be released without endangering the physical or mental health or safety of any individual or contravening any of the data protection principles: -

The total figures for the number of Osman Warnings (TTL) issued per calendar year were as follows:

Osman Warnings /TTL Notices	
2019	32
2020	29