



Your reference:

Our reference: FOI_24_1092

E-mail: FOI

@gloucestershire.police.uk

Direct dial: 01452 754304

Postal Address: As above

Date: 30/12/2024

Dear

Gloucestershire Constabulary Freedom of Information request FOI_24_1092

On 02/12/2024 you sent an email constituting a request under the Freedom of Information Act asking the following:

This is a request under the Freedom of Information Act.

For context, this request is related to crimes of abuse linked to faith or belief as defined by the Metropolitan Police in the link below (the Met's definition is specially about children whereas I am looking at cases involving children and/or adults) -

<https://www.met.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/caa/child-abuse/faith-based-abuse>. It states: "Abuse linked to faith or belief is where concerns for a (person's) welfare have been identified, and could be caused by, a belief in witchcraft, spirit or demonic possession, ritual or satanic abuse features; or when practices linked to faith or belief are harmful to a (person)."

Abuse linked to faith or belief is also defined here in this government national action plan - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175437/Action_Plan_-_Abuse_linked_to_Faith_or_Belief.pdf

For each calendar year 2021, 2022, 2023 and for the period 1st January 2024 to 28th November 2024, please could you tell me:

- 1) The number of cases of abuse linked to faith or belief (as defined above) that have been reported
- 2) A brief description of each case and the outcome if known (i.e. arrest, charge, on bail, no further action, etc)
- 3) The number of crime reports where the term "witch", or "witchcraft", or "demon", or "exorcism" is mentioned in the MO field of the crime report

4) A brief description of each reported crime from your answer to question 3) and the outcome if known (i.e. arrest, charge, on bail, no further action, etc)

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 s1, I can confirm that Gloucestershire Constabulary may hold some relevant information.

Unfortunately, there is no central register for recording reports of faith or belief-linked abuse, and no way to retrieve this information by way of electronic searches. The only way to identify any reports of such would be to manually review incident records

When an Individual contacts the police and it's deemed to be a police matter, an incident will be created on the Incident Recording System. If that incident is deemed to fall within the Home Office Crime Recording Rules, a crime will be recorded on the Crime Recording System. Please note that the Incident Recording System is largely a free text entry system and does not record information in as much detail as the Crime Recording System and therefore its reporting function is limited meaning that a manual review and cross-reference of records and systems will be required in order to determine if relevant information is held.

Even by narrowing this request down to the most likely department to potentially hold information relevant to your enquiry, we have estimated that this part of the request would far exceed the permitted time constraints, therefore Section 12 of the Act is applicable. This section does not oblige a public authority to comply with a request for information if the authority estimated that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the appropriate limit of 18 hours, equating to £450.00

You should consider this to be a refusal notice under Section 17 of the Act for this part of your request.

Section 17(5) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires Gloucestershire Constabulary, when refusing to provide information (because the information is exempt) to provide you the applicant with a notice which: (a) states the fact, (b) specifies the exemption in question and (c) states (if not otherwise apparent) why the exemption applies.

In relation to your request Section 12 applies.

Section 12(1)– Fee Regulations states:

Section 1(1) of the Act 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 appropriate limit. (As detailed in the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Fees Regulations of 2004)

The appropriate limit at the moment is £450 calculated at an hourly rate of £25 per hour for all staff time incurred in:

- i. Determining whether information is held
- ii. Locating it
- iii. Retrieving it
- iv. Extracting the information to be disclosed from the other information.

In accordance with the Act, this letter represents a Refusal Notice for your request.

Providing Information Outside of the Act

By way of assistance and although excess cost removes the Force's obligations under the Freedom of Information Act, we have supplied the information relevant to your request which has already been retrieved. We trust this is helpful but it does not affect our legal right to rely on the fees regulations for the remainder of your request.

Q3-4. A search of the Crime Recording System was carried out to identify all substantiated crimes recorded between 01/01/2021 and 28/11/2024 where the MO freetext contains at least one of the following terms:

- witch
- witchcraft
- demon
- demons
- exorcism

This has returned 29 records in total. Following a manual review for relevance to your request, the total has reduced to 8. Please see the table below for the breakdown of the recorded offences and the outcome.

Offence / Outcome	Year			Total
	2021	2022	2023	
Common assault & battery				
Evidential difficulties: suspect identified; victim does not support further action			1	1
Harassment no violence				
Evidential difficulties: suspect identified; victim does not support further action	1	1		2
Investigation complete: no suspect identified		1		1
Malicious communications				
Evidential difficulties: suspect not identified; victim does not support further action	1			1
Evidential difficulties: suspect identified; victim does not support further action	1	1		2
Investigation complete: no suspect identified		1		1
Total	3	4	1	8

If you are not satisfied with this response or any actions taken in dealing with your request, you have the right to ask that we review your case under our internal procedure. Please note that a request for an internal review must be made within 20 working days of the response to your original request.

If you decide to request that such a review is undertaken and following this process you are still unsatisfied, you then have the right to direct your complaint to the Information Commissioner for consideration.

The Information Commissioner can be contacted via the following means:

Website - <https://ico.org.uk/>

Call their helpline - 0303 123 1113

Email - casework@ico.org.uk

Post –

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely,

Disclosure Officer
Gloucestershire Constabulary