



Your reference: n/a

Our reference: FOI_25_0069

E-mail: FOI
@gloucestershire.police.uk

Direct dial: 01452 754304

Postal Address: As above

Date: 05/03/2025

Dear

Gloucestershire Constabulary Freedom of Information request FOI_25_0069

On 20/01/2025 you sent an email constituting a request under the Freedom of Information Act asking the following:

Could you please tell me:

1. How many attempted and successful child abductions occurred in your regional police force area during the years of 2018 and 2019, broken down by month.
2. How many attempted and successful child abductions occurred in your regional police force area during the year of 2024, broken down by month - and during the month of January 2025, to date.
3. With respect to the 2024 attempted and successful child abductions could you please tell me:
 - a. Where did these attempted/successful abductions take place?
 - b. When did they take place?
 - c. What description of the attempted/successful abductor was made available to the public?
 - d. What description of the attempted/successful abductor is held on record?

You further clarified that you are only interested in 'non-parental attempted/successful abductions'.

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

Police Forces in the United Kingdom are routinely required to provide statistics to government bodies and the recording criteria is set nationally. However, the systems used for recording these figures are not generic, nor are the procedures used locally in capturing the data. It should be noted that for these reasons the figures given relate to information from the specific recording system of Gloucestershire Constabulary and should not be used for comparison purposes with any other response you receive.

Please note that our systems are designed to record information for policing purposes and the investigation of crime and not to extract statistical information. Accordingly whilst we endeavour to extract relevant data within the time limits of the Act, any data supplied is subject to these limitations.

I can confirm that a search has been conducted of Crimes Recorded from 01/01/2018 to 31/12/2019 and from 01/01/2024 to 31/12/2024 whereby any of the following offences were recorded:

- Attempt to take a child so as to remove him / her from a person having lawful control - CH84003A - 013/02
- Detain a child so as to keep him / her from a person having lawful control - CH84006 – 013/02
- Detain a child so as to remove him / her from a person having lawful control - CH84004 – 013/02
- Take a child so as to keep him / her from a person having lawful control - CH84005 – 013/02
- Take a child so as to remove him / her from a person having lawful control - CH84003 – 013/02

The MOs of the resultant crimes have been manually reviewed to ascertain if the parents of the child were involved in the offence.

The results are as follows:

1. & 2. I can confirm that a total of 9 crimes were recorded between 2018 and 2019. A monthly breakdown of this figure and any information relating to 2024/25 is exempt under sections 31 and 40 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please see further details below.
3. This information is exempt under Sections 30 and 40 of the Freedom of Information Act.

Section 17 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.

With regard to the further breakdown of the information in questions 1 and 2, the following exemptions apply:

Section 40(2) – Personal Information
Section 31(1) – Law Enforcement

Section 40(2) applies to third party personal data. This would not be released under the Freedom of Information Act unless there is a strong public interest. This is because any release would breach the Data Protection Principles contained within the Data Protection Act 2018, namely the first principle which requires that personal information be processed lawfully, fairly and with transparency. The Constabulary will not release any information under the Freedom of Information Act which may result in the identification of an individual and in particular the victim of a crime. Due in part to the specific nature of the crime, it is

highly likely that an individual may be identified; this includes the potential for a victim of a crime or their family/friends to identify themselves in any disclosed information.

This exemption is absolute and class based therefore I am not required to apply either the public interest test or harm test in disclosure.

S.31(1) is qualified and prejudice based therefore both a Public Interest Test and Harm Test are required.

Evidence of Harm

Modern day policing is intelligence led and relies on the confidence of the public to come forward and report offences. To disclose numbers of crimes recorded broken down by month relating to these specific offences could highlight to those who may have carried out the offences whether the police are aware of their offending. This would then be likely to undermine the Police service's ability to serve the public in preventing and detecting crime and can only be considered as being harmful to the public.

Public Interest Test

Factors in Favour of Disclosure

The disclosure of this information would lead to a better public awareness of how Gloucestershire Constabulary investigates such offences and would provide reassurance to the public that the Constabulary takes these offences very seriously.

Factors against Disclosure

Disclosing the number of offences recorded would show whether Gloucestershire Constabulary has recorded a relatively high or low number of offences which could highlight to offenders that the Police are not, or would not have been, aware of their offending behaviour.

Balance Test

The points above highlight the merits for and against disclosure. Disclosure will provide a greater openness and transparency to the communities we serve regarding this specific offence. However, as much as there is a public interest in knowing how these offences are recorded and investigated, this is overridden by the potential for personal data to be disclosed and the likelihood of other offences not being reported.

With regard to the specific information requested in question 3 for 2024 offences, the crimes recorded in 2024 are still under investigation and therefore Section 30 of the Freedom of Information Act is engaged as well as Section 40 (as detailed above).

Section 30 is a qualified, class based exemption and therefore a public interest test is required.

Public Interest Test

Factors Favouring Disclosure

The disclosure of this information may provide the public with an awareness of any patterns in relation to this type of crime and help to inform public debate on this subject.

Factors against Disclosure

All of the information gathered forms part of an investigation which may be ongoing and any disclosure could undermine the effectiveness of the investigation. Furthermore the disclosure of a detailed breakdown in relation to an individual case may identify whether specific offending behaviour has been reported to the Police and if not, may result in a continuance of the behaviour. Victims may be able to identify themselves from the information disclosed, thereby causing further distress and deterring them from reporting future instances of harm to the Police. This will hinder the prevention and detection of crime.

Balance Test

The Police Service is charged with enforcing the law, preventing and detecting crime and protecting the communities we serve. The effectiveness of investigations and the intelligence they provide is of paramount importance and the Police service will not divulge details that could compromise any ongoing investigations or the prevention and detection of crime.

For the reasons set out above it is our opinion that the balance test is in favour of withholding the requested information.

Gloucestershire Constabulary can neither confirm nor deny that it holds any other information with regard to an exempt body as the duty in Section 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 does not apply by virtue of the following exemption:

Section 23(5) Information supplied by, or concerning, certain Security Bodies

Section 23 is a class based absolute exemption and there is no requirement to consider the public interest in this case.

Confirming or denying the existence of whether any other information is held would contravene the constrictions laid out within Section 23 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 in that this stipulates a generic bar on disclosure of any information applied by, or concerning, certain Security Bodies.

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