

**Gloucestershire Constabulary**  
Police Headquarters  
No.1 Waterwells, Waterwells Drive  
Quedgeley, Gloucester. GL2 2AN  
[www.gloucestershire.police.uk](http://www.gloucestershire.police.uk)



Your reference: N/A

Our reference: FOI\_26\_0469

E-mail: FOI

@gloucestershire.police.uk

Direct dial: 01452 754304

Postal Address: As above

Date: 19/05/2026

Dear

**Gloucestershire Constabulary Freedom of Information request FOI\_26\_0469**

On 14/05/2026 you sent an email constituting a request under the Freedom of Information Act asking the following:

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I am requesting data held by Gloucestershire Constabulary relating to investigations and prosecutions involving evidence supplied by online vigilante or "paedophile hunter" groups. Please provide, for each calendar year from 2016 to the most recent year available:

A.) The total number of recorded offences and/or prosecutions for: "Meeting a child following sexual grooming" (Sexual Offences Act 2003, section 15), and Any other child sexual abuse or child exploitation offences where data is centrally recorded.

B.) The number of these cases in which evidence was supplied, initiated, or materially supported by: online vigilante groups, "paedophile hunter" groups, civilian sting operations, or similar non-police groups. Any guidance, policy documents, or internal protocols relating to the handling or use of evidence provided by such groups. If held, the names or categories used internally to classify these investigations. Please provide the information in electronic format, preferably as a spreadsheet or table. If any part of this request exceeds the appropriate cost limit, please advise how the request may be refined to remain within the limit.

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

Question A. When searching for recorded sexual offences using a range of a shorter period of your request, we had an outcome of over 4,000 records

Unfortunately, it's not possible to electronically search for the information you have requested. In relation to Question B. There is no tag/field on the crime recording system that may denote that evidence of the offence was provided by 'paedophile hunters'. In order to ascertain if such evidence was provided to the Police, a manual review of the MOs and electronic crime enquiries of all crimes would need to be conducted. As this would involve manually reviewing thousands of records for the 10-year period requested, this would clearly take far longer than the 18 hours prescribed by Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act.

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.

Section 16 of the Freedom of Information Act provides the opportunity to assist the applicant with any suggestions or variation that may allow a search to be undertaken within the cost constraints of Section 12 of the Act.

We can conduct a search of the Crime Recording System for substantiated crimes where specific terms may appear in the MO freetext. The results of this would greatly depend on how the information is recorded within the MO as there is no exact terminology or names used to identify such groups.

If this search would be of use to you, please provide the terms you wish for us to search for, along with confirmation of the offences that are pertinent. A link to the Home Office Crime Recording Rules has been provided below. Please note that there may still be a need to manually review the results for relevance to your request, and depending on the number of crimes retrieved from such a search, the request could still engage Section 12 of the Act.

[Home Office Crime Recording Rules for frontline officers and staff - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/614441/CRS-Rules-2018.pdf)

Please note that, depending on the number of crimes retrieved from such a search, the request could still attract the exemption at Section 12 of the Act.

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](mailto:casework@ico.org.uk)

Post –

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

Yours sincerely,

Disclosure Officer  
Gloucestershire Constabulary