

Gloucestershire Constabulary
Police Headquarters
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Our reference: FOI_26_0621

E-mail: FOI

@gloucestershire.police.uk

Direct dial: 01452 754304

Postal Address: As above

Date: 04/08/2026

Dear

Gloucestershire Constabulary Freedom of Information request FOI_26_0621

On 02/07/2026 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 2000. Please provide the following information regarding criminal cases involving independent civilian online decoy groups (often referred to as "pedophile hunters" or "online vigilante groups").

Requested Information:

The total number of criminal prosecutions or scheduled trials related to online child sexual exploitation/grooming that were discontinued, stayed, thrown out, or resulted in a directed 'not guilty' verdict due to issues arising from evidence gathered by civilian vigilante groups, for the calendar years 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, and 2026 to date.

For each identified case in 2026 only, please provide a brief summary of the reasons for the case's collapse (e.g., breach of evidence continuity, reliability of the witness, entrapment/inducement concerns, or non-disclosure of full chat logs).

Please let me know if I need to clarify my request in any way or if it needs to be altered to comply with regulations including the statutory cost limit.

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

Unfortunately, it is not possible to electronically search for the data you have requested as we do not have a tag / marker for "paedophile hunters" or "online vigilante groups". To attempt to source your request, we would be required to manually search all records which we are confidently estimating would exceed the 18 hours prescribed by the Freedom of Information Act. Therefore, section 12 of the Act is engaged.

Please see below for suggestions on how you may be able to refine your request to come within the cost constraints of Section 12 of the 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 – duty to assist

It may be possible for the Constabulary's crime recording database to be searched, applying key words that you provide us. You will need to provide us with the Home Office criminal offences you would like us to use. Please use the link below for sourcing this information:

[Home Office Crime Recording Rules for frontline officers, staff - GOV.UK](#)

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