

**Force Disclosure Unit**

Wiltshire Police HQ

London Road

Devizes

Wiltshire

SN10 2DN

Tel 101 ext 62005

www.wiltshire.police.ukdisclosure@wiltshire.pnn.police.uk

XXXX – by email

Date: 5th March 2021

Your ref: FOI

Our ref: FOI 2021 / 197

Reply contact name is: Nick Penny

Dear XXXX,

I write in connection with your request for information dated 4th March 2021 concerning Racial Abuse on Social Media.

I am required by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to handle all requests in a manner that is blind as to the identity and motives of the requestor. Any information released as a response to a request is regarded as being published and therefore in the public domain without caveat.

Your request for information has now been considered and I am not obliged to supply the information you have requested.

You wrote:

The total number of reports received by the police of racist abuse on social media from March 4, 2017 to March 4, 2021 ?

Of that figure, how many were investigated ?

And how many of the investigations resulted in an arrest/charge ?

Also, can you please give me a breakdown of which social media sites the offences were committed on - meaning the total number of offences on each site ?

Our response:

The information that you are requesting for the majority of your request is not stored in a way which permits easy retrieval.

Whilst Wiltshire Police's system(s) are sophisticated we do not have specific fields in which we record whether an incident has occurred on a social media platform or elsewhere – as a consequence we cannot easily run automated searches to determine records that meet your criteria.



Between March 4th 2017 and March 4th 2021, there have been c2400 individual reports made to Wiltshire Police under the NICL Qualifying Code that distinguishes Racial incidents from others of a Hate Crime nature. Of these, c1,900 ultimately ended up being recorded as formal crimes and were duly investigated.

Whilst we can run “wildcard” or “free-text” searches for specific words that feature within the abbreviated summary description of crimes and offences on our systems, these are notoriously unreliable and we generally do not publish results using these searches because of that. In this instance, it is not practical to use that method to try and identify instances where Social Media Platforms mentioned in crime reports for a number of reasons :-

- a) There are simply too many to draw up a definitive list (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, all relevant dating sites and so on)
- b) The name of the platform may not even be mentioned in the summary description and only be in the longer crime log (which we are unable to search)
- c) If a platform name is spelt incorrectly it will not be returned in any wildcard or free text search
- d) etc

The information you require would only be discernible by us reading each and every occurrence log of all the crime reports / incident reports of Racial Abuse for the time period you have requested.

Given the sheer number of these that there have been since March 2017 - and allowing a very generous 5 minutes per record to see if it met your criteria - I am absolutely confident that to locate, retrieve and extract the information you seek would by far exceed the time obligations upon this authority to comply, and in so doing would exceed the fees limits. This is set at £450 calculated at a flat rate of £25 per hour for those work activities comprising of confirming the information is held, locating it, retrieving it and extracting it.

Ordinarily under our section 16 duty to provide advice and assistance, we would advise you how to refine your request to a more manageable level. However, due to the difficulties outlined above, I cannot see how this can be achieved in this particular case, as even reducing your request to only 1 years worth of data would still be in excess of our time obligations to reply.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Wiltshire 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 exemption applicable to the information requested is:

Section 12: Exemption where cost of compliance exceeds appropriate limit

- (1) Section 1(1) 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.

In accordance with section 17 of the Act, this letter represents a Refusal Notice for this particular request.

I am satisfied that all the relevant information has been passed to me and been considered in the light of your request within the time constraints applicable under the legislation.

Wiltshire Police would like to thank you for the interest that you have shown in the Force.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Penny
Disclosure Decision Maker

Wiltshire Police offers a re-examination of your case under its review procedure.



Force Disclosure Unit

Wiltshire Police HQ, London Road, Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 2DN
Telephone 101 ext 62005

Freedom of Information Request Appeals Procedure

1. Who Can Ask for a Review

Any person who has requested information from Wiltshire Police, which has been dealt with under the Freedom of Information Act, is entitled to complain and request an internal review, if they are dissatisfied with the response they received.

2. How to Request a Review

Requests for review of a Freedom of Information request must be made in writing to the:
Force Disclosure Unit
Wiltshire Police Headquarters,
London Road, Devizes,
Wiltshire,
SN10 2DN

Email at disclosure@wiltshire.pnn.police.uk.

The reference number, date of the request and details of why the review is being requested must be included. Requests for review should be brought to the attention of the Force Disclosure Unit within 20 working days of the Force's response to the original Fol request.

3. Review Procedure

Receipt of a request for review will be acknowledged in writing to include confirmation of the reasons for the review. The review will be conducted by another Decision Maker, who is independent from the original Decision Maker. The Force Disclosure Unit will set a target date for a response. The response will be made as soon as is practicable with the intention to complete the review within twenty working days. In more complex cases the review may take up to 40 working days.

The Independent Decision Maker will conduct a review of the handling of the request for information and of decisions taken, including decisions taken about where the public interest lies in respect of exempt information where applicable. The review enables a re-evaluation of the case, taking into account the matters raised by the complaint.

4. Conclusion of the Appeal

On completion of the review the Independent Decision Maker will reply to the complainant with the result of the review. If the complainant is still dissatisfied following the review they should contact the Information Commissioner to make an appeal. The Information Commissioner can be contacted via the following details:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF
Tel: 01625 545 700
Fax: 01625 524 510
Email: mail@ico.gsi.gov.uk