



Force Disclosure Unit
Wiltshire Police HQ
London Road
Devizes
Wiltshire
SN10 2DN
Tel 101 ext. 62005
www.wiltshire.police.uk
disclosure@wiltshire.police.uk

Date: 24 August 2021

Your ref: **FOI**

Our ref: FOI 2021/535

Reply contact name is: Kerry Merritt

Dear ****,

I write in connection with your request for information, dated 16th July 2021, concerning County Lines Profiles.

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.

Following receipt of your request, searches were conducted with the Wiltshire Intelligence Unit of Wiltshire Police.

Your request for information has now been considered and it is not possible to meet your requirements in full.

The below was agreed via email after your original request would have cited section 14 response.

You wrote:

- 1) Would reducing the scope of my request to a copy of the most recent three reports produced on "County Lines/Exploitative Drug Networks" bring my request within the cost limit?

Response:

Question One: Please see attached.

Please note that the attached documents (Q1 2020, Q3 2020 and Q4 Annual Review 2020) have been redacted in accordance with the following exemption of the Freedom of Information Act 2000:

Section 31(1) – Law Enforcement

Section 31(1) is a prejudice based and qualified exemption, therefore the harm (prejudice) in disclosure should be evidenced and the public interest given.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Overall Harm

Although every effort should be made to release information under the Freedom of Information Act, to disclose this type of information in full could prejudice future law enforcement tactics and investigations.

Although there is public interest in the transparency of policing, which would provide assurance to the public that the police service is appropriately and effectively engaging in the investigations in County Lines, which is a highly emotive and major crime, this is countered by the need to protect any future law enforcement conducted by Wiltshire Police.

Furthermore, there is a very strong public interest in safeguarding the integrity of police investigations and operations, especially in relation to these types of offences. This, in-turn, would reassure the public that the police are highly secure and would not disclose any information to the world, not just the requester, which may jeopardise law enforcement or investigations.

Public Interest Considerations

Section 31 – Law Enforcement

Factors Favouring Disclosure

The disclosure of this information in full would lead to a better-informed public and promote trust by demonstrating openness, transparency and accountability. This is especially important in relation to highly emotive offences which have a large public interest. In addition, the public are entitled to know how public funds are being spent in relation to these.

Factors Against Disclosure

Disclosing this information in full would provide the world, not just the requester, sensitive information surrounding County Lines and Wiltshire Police's tactics and response to them, which would undoubtedly compromise law enforcement tactics which would lead to a hindrance on the Police Force's ability to prevent and detect crimes. Vulnerable areas could be identified by force level disclosure leading to more criminal activity placing the public in harm's way. This could place Wiltshire Police's law enforcement, whether it be investigations, operations, intelligence, integrity etc. into jeopardy.

To disclose sensitive and operational materials into the public domain would highlight that Wiltshire Police does not take the security and integrity of law enforcement seriously, which would cause a large drop in public confidence. This, potentially, would lead to members of the public to not want to report incidents, which would lead to criminals not being detected and victims being repeatedly targeted.

Balance Test

The above points highlight both the merits and issues with disclosing in full the requested information in relation to your Freedom of Information request. Overall the police service is charged with enforcing the law, preventing and detecting crime and protecting the communities we serve. Because of this, Wiltshire Police will not divulge any information if to do so would prejudice our law enforcement capabilities and in turn lead to more victims of crime and offenders not being brought to justice. The public interest is very largely in favour of non-disclosure in full to ensure the capability of law enforcement of Wiltshire Police.

This would only be overridden in exceptional circumstances, which this Freedom of Information request is not.

In addition to this, Wiltshire Police 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.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires Wiltshire Police, when refusing to provide 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. In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 this letter acts as a Refusal Notice for those aspects of your request.

Exemption applied:

Section 31(1) – Law Enforcement

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

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

Yours sincerely

Kerry Merritt
Force 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.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

Please note that the ICO's offices will be closed for the foreseeable future and are therefore unable to receive correspondence via post.

If you should wish you contact them, please visit <https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/>