



XXXXXXX
By email



Force Disclosure Unit
Wiltshire Police HQ
London Road
Devizes
Wiltshire
SN10 2DN
Tel 101 ext. 62005

Website: www.wiltshire.police.uk
Email: disclosure@wiltshire.police.uk

Date: 14th January 2022

Our ref: FOI 2022/031

Reply contact name is: Abigail Standidge

Dear XXXXX,

I write in connection with your request for information dated 11th January 2022, concerning Jehovah's Witness organisation Child Sexual Abuse / Exploitation allegations.

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, research was conducted by the Intelligence (Exploitation) and Public Protection Departments at Wiltshire Police. Your request for information has now been considered and I am not obliged to supply the information you have requested.

You wrote:

This is a Freedom of Information Act request for information for data you hold investigations into allegations of child sexual abuse and/or exploitation (CSA/E) related to the Jehovah's Witness organisation.

For the questions below, please take the phrase "involving the Jehovah's Witness organisation" to mean that the accused and / or the victim were a Jehovah's Witness.

The questions are listed in order of priority, please answer as many as possible within the allotted time.

1. How many allegations of child sexual abuse and/or exploitation involving the Jehovah's Witness organisation has your force received over the past 10 years? Please provide an annual total for the number of alleged perpetrators/suspects of this crime notified to your force each year.
2. How many investigations into allegations of CSA/E involving the Jehovah's Witness organisation has your force carried OUT over the past 10 years? Please provide an annual total number of investigations for each year.
3. Please break down the total number of investigations by status. This can be 'live' or 'closed'. If 'closed', please specify the investigation outcome, including but not limited to: no further action (NFA) by police, NFA by the Crown Prosecution Service, caution, acquittal or conviction.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

4. For all investigations which were closed following NFA by police, please state the reasons why no further action was taken (such as, suspect deceased; suspect not identified/traced; victim does not support police action; insufficient detail/evidence; and specifically, whether lack of cooperation from the Jehovah's Witness organisation was also a contributing factor.
5. For all investigations of CSA/E involving the Jehovah's Witness organisation, please can you state whether a report of the alleged abuse was made within the Jehovah's Witness congregation/organisation before it was reported to the police? For example, the JW organisation may have disclosed to you internal documents they had in relation to a report of the alleged abuse.

Our response:

The information you are requesting is not stored in a way which permits for easy retrieval. The religious beliefs of an individual, regardless of whether they are the suspect or victim of an offence, is not a mandatory field to record. Some individuals may choose to voluntarily disclose their religious beliefs, however, to provide an accurate response to this request would require a manual review of all Child Sexual Abuse / Exploitation offences from the last 10 years. This would likely require reviewing thousands of records to determine whether the suspect and/or victim was a member of the Jehovah's Witness organisation.

Under the circumstances 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. Therefore the whole of the request should fall under the exemption of section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Please also note that if one part of the request engages a Section 12 response, the whole request will engage a Section 12 response. The reason being is due to the fact that locating, retrieving and extracting any further information would only add to the already exceeded time obligations.

Ordinarily under our Section 16 obligation to provide advice and assistance we would advise you of a way to refine your request to a more manageable level. Due to the difficulties in obtaining the requested information, as outlined above, I cannot think of a way in which this could be achieved.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires 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.

Please contact me if you would like to discuss the withheld information.

Yours sincerely

Abigail Standidge
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 FoI 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 to contact them, please visit <https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/>