

**Force Disclosure Unit**

Wiltshire Police HQ

London Road

Devizes

Wiltshire

SN10 2DN

Tel 101 ext 62005

www.wiltshire.police.ukdisclosure@wiltshire.police.ukDate: 24th March 2022

Your Ref: FOI

Our Ref: FOI 2022/201

Reply contact name is: Kay Moore

Dear,

I write in connection with your request for information dated 24th February 2022 concerning cases impacted by contamination of evidence.

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:

I am not requesting specific documents, but would like the following questions answered please:

- 1) In the last 5 years, how many pieces of evidence have been contaminated by frontline officers?
- 2) In the last 5 years, how many cases have been impacted because of the contamination of evidence by frontline officers?
- 3) In the last 5 years, how many cases have not made it as far as court due to the contamination of evidence by frontline officers?
- 4) What has the contamination of evidence cost the Police force, in the last 5 years? Please breakdown per annum.
- 5) In the last 5 years, during the investigation of crime, how many footwear marks recovered from a crime scene have been identified/eliminated to a frontline officer?
- 6) In the last 5 years, during the investigation of crime, how many finger marks recovered from a crime scene have been identified/eliminated to a frontline officer?
- 7) In the last 5 years, during the investigation of crime, how many DNA samples recovered from a crime scene have been identified/eliminated to a frontline officer?
- 8) What is the cost to the force per year in identification/elimination of samples from scenes, to a frontline officer?
- 9) How frequently do Police officers receive forensic awareness training?
- 10) What is the cost, per officer, of this training?



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Our response:

The information that you are requesting for the majority of your request (namely questions 1 – 8) is not stored in a way which permits easy retrieval.

In order to ascertain this information, this would involve us having to manually peruse through each criminal investigation that has taken place over the last 5 years where forensic evidence has been a factor. This is because we do not keep a central record of the details requested in relation to contaminated evidence, or the cost to the force of such instances.

Therefore, 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.

Please 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 duty to provide advice and assistance, we would advise you how to refine your request to a more manageable level and in order to do this, I would suggest omitting questions 1 – 8.

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,

Kay Moore
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