

**Force Disclosure Unit**

Wiltshire Police HQ

London Road

Devizes

Wiltshire

SN10 2DN

Tel 101 ext 62005

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

XXXXXX – by email

Date: 20th June 2022

Your ref: FOI

Our ref: FOI 2022 / 510

Reply contact name is: Nick Penny

Dear XXXXXX,

I write in connection with your request for information dated 17th June 2022 concerning Fraud and Blackmail (sexual favours).

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 would like to know:

- The number of reported cases of fraud linked to dating apps from January 1, 2017, until the most recent date figures are available.

- During the same period, the number of reported cases of blackmail in which users have been threatened with having explicit photos published if they do not perform some kind of sexual favour.

- In both cases, I would like a breakdown of:

- the specific app used (such as Tinder, Grindr, or Hinge)
- the nature of the fraud or blackmail
- the sexes/ages of the victims
- the dates of the reports
- what the result of the report was

I would appreciate it if the information could be presented in a spreadsheet format - preferably in Excel or Google Sheets.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Our response:

The information that you are requesting is not stored in a way which permits easy retrieval.

With regards to Fraud, Wiltshire Police do not hold any information in respect of the vast majority of cases of Fraud that get reported to them.

In almost all instances, any reports of Fraud offences get referred directly to Action Fraud, which is the UK's National Reporting Agency for Fraud and Cyber Crime for subsequent investigation. Our response in regards to this part of your request is therefore – **No Information Held**.

With regards to Blackmail, there is no specific Home Office crime recording code under which such crimes are recorded if they are related to threats to publish explicit photographs or the performing of sexual favours.

Indeed, it may well be the case that such cases – especially if they have escalated beyond being simply threat – might well have been recorded under more specific and serious crime categories such as those used for Sexual Offences and so on.

Although we could use “wildcard” or “free-text” searches for the words “Tinder”, “Grindr” and “Hinge” that are mentioned in the summary description of offences held on our database to try and identify any occurrences where they are featured - and then review each result to see if it met the criteria you are asking for - results of searches using that method are typically flawed. We could not guarantee the integrity of any search results retrieved using that method and we certainly could not put information into the public domain when we are not certain of the results produced.

Among the reasons why we cannot trust the results generated by the use of wildcards or free-text searches include but are not limited to the following :-

- Wildcard searches are reliant on the specific words being spelt correctly – any derivations, abbreviations, mis-spellings etc would not be picked up in searches
- The 3 keywords you mention (“Tinder”, “Grindr” and “Hinge”) would not necessarily return all potential offences of this nature – there may have been other similar offences conducted using other dating app’s than the 3 you mention
- We are only able to undertake “wildcard” or “free-text” searches on the short summary description of an offence which comprises approx. 200 characters, NOT on the whole content of the complete occurrence log of an incident. If the name of a dating app is included in the lengthy occurrence log but not the short summary, then it will not be returned in any search undertaken
- Etc

The ascertaining of the information you require - in respect of Blackmail cases involving offences of the type you mention that are related to the use of the 3 apps mentioned - would only be possible by physically reading every crime occurrence log for the time period you mention to see if it met your criteria.

Given that Wiltshire Police typically record something in the region of 40,000 individual crimes in any given calendar year, 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

It also needs to be remembered that there is no obligation on an Authority to create information where it does not exist today, simply in order to answer an FOI request.

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.

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 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