



Force Disclosure Unit

Wiltshire Police HQ

London Road

Devizes

Wiltshire

SN10 2DN

Tel 101 ext 62005

www.wiltshire.police.uk

disclosure@wiltshire.pnn.police.uk

XXXXXX – by E Mail

Date: 1st February 2023

Your ref: FOI

Our ref: FOI 2023 / 136

Reply contact name is: Nick Penny

Dear XXXXXX,

I write in connection with your request for information dated 25th January 2023 concerning Children left alone.

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 – having consulted our Business Performance Team - I am now able to respond as follows.

You wrote (and Our Response) :

Under the Freedom of Information Act, I am requesting the following information in relation to your force area only (please answer all questions for years 2020, 2021 and 2022 individually):

1. How many times did the force take a report (from the public or other agencies) about a child/children under the age of 18 being left at home alone or unsupervised in any other space (to include vehicles)?

2020 8 reports (9 children involved in total)

2021 11 reports (17 children involved in total)

2022 39 reports (55 children involved in total)

2. How many times did the force take a report (from the public or other agencies) about a child/children aged 6-12 years being left at home alone or unsupervised in any other space (to include vehicles)?

2020 0 reports

2021 6 reports (8 children involved in total of this age bracket)

2022 5 reports (7 children involved in total of this age bracket)



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

3. How many times did the force take a report (from the public or other agencies) about a child/children aged 0-5 years being left at home alone or unsupervised in any other space (to include vehicles)?

2020 2 reports (2 children involved in total of this age bracket)

2021 4 reports (5 children involved in total of this age bracket)

2022 4 reports (7 children involved in total of this age bracket)

4. In relation to each report relating to a child/children aged 0-5 years, what action was taken by the police?

Any reports made to Wiltshire Police are treated seriously and investigated thoroughly – irrespective of the individual circumstances – and, always, in accordance with agreed PACE guidelines.

Witnesses are spoken to, suspects questioned and evidence sourced (this could involve anything from statements, interviews, phone records, medical records and so on).

Risk assessments are undertaken at the earliest opportunity with victims to ensure the right Safeguarding measures are put in place and shared via our MASH process with Local Authorities and Social Care – this in turn may result in families becoming subject to future Care Plans and so on.

Early intervention may result in children being removed to a place of safety to ensure that early safeguarding is in place.

All investigative and evidential lines of enquiry are pursued prior to a decision being taken - sometimes following discussion and consultation with the CPS - as to whether there are grounds to charge an individual for an offence (in which case the process proceeds down the Court / Prosecution route). If not, the case is closed and parties notified of the outcome.

If we were to summarise what specific action was taken by Wiltshire Police on each of the individual reports involving children 0-5 years, it would necessitate accessing and reading the occurrence log and every item of evidence currently saved (not to mention also probably questioning a number of the officers concerned). This would almost certainly exempt a response under Section 12 of the FOIA on the grounds that the time cost involved would exceed the obligations of this Authority to comply with the request.

In addition, the provision of a lot of this specific information (were we able to supply any of it within timescale) would also likely to be exempt under any one (or more) of the following Sections of the FOIA :-

Section 30	Investigations and procedures of public authorities
Section 31	Law Enforcement
Section 38	Health & Safety
Section 40	Personal Information

However, under our Section 16 obligation to assist an applicant wherever possible I would direct you to the following page of the College of Policing website, which will provide you with further information in respect of the investigative processes at Police Forces :-

www.college.police.uk/app/investigation/investigation-process

5. How many people have been arrested for offences relating to a child/children (of any age range) being left at home alone or unsupervised in any other space (to include vehicles)? Please confirm for which offences they were arrested, their age and their gender.

2020 5 arrested

2021 7 arrested

2022 7 arrested

6. How many people have been charged with offences relating to a child/children (of any age range) being left at home alone or unsupervised in any other space (to include vehicles)? Please confirm for which offences they were charged, their age and their gender.

2020 None

2021 2 Woman, 31, charged with the following :-

- **Assault / ill-treat / neglect / abandon a child/young person to cause unnecessary suffering / injury AND**
- **Drunk in charge of a child under 7 years**

Woman, 28, charged with the following :-

- **Drunk in charge of a child under 7 years**

2022 None

7. How many children (aged 0-5 years) have died as a result of being left being left at home alone or unsupervised in any other space (to include vehicles)?

2020 None

2021 None

2022 None

8. How many children (aged 6-12 years) have died as a result of being left being left at home alone or unsupervised in any other space (to include vehicles)?

2020 None

2021 None

2022 None

9. How many children (aged 0-5 years) have been injured as a result of being left being left at home alone or unsupervised in any other space (to include vehicles)?
10. How many children (aged 6-12 years) have been injured as a result of being left being left at home alone or unsupervised in any other space (to include vehicles)?

In respect of questions 9 and 10 our response is - No information held.

There is no obligation for an Authority to provide an explanation as to why information may not be held, however under our Section 16 duty to be as helpful as possible to an applicant, I am willing to provide a degree of clarity in respect of this :-

Whilst our crime recording system(s) are sophisticated, we do not have separate searchable fields in which we record whether an individual may have suffered some form of injury in an incident.

Indeed, if subsequent medical reports were ordered in respect of any of these incidents, it is highly likely that they will be held with other agencies (eg Social Care, Local Councils), especially if the families are known to them or if they are currently under a protection plan for instance.

It also needs to be remembered that when it comes to “injuries” this is a very subjective subject and if a child is distressed, hot or hungry having been left, it could be argued that they may have suffered a degree of mental injury in the incident. However, depending on the individuals attending, this would be open to personal discretion and assessment.

It also needs to be remembered that under the FOIA, there is also no obligation on an Authority to provide an opinion, which – inevitably in respect of any injuries received – would be the basis of any information we were able to provide here.

Please Note :

All of the offences considered in this response are those which have been reported to Wiltshire Police and recorded on our crime recording systems under the following Home Office crime code :-

11/3 Cruelty to and neglect of children

Over the time-period you have requested (2020-22 inclusive), there have been 58 individual reports made to Wiltshire Police, covering 81 different children. Whenever a report is received it needs to be noted that a separate crime record is created for every individual child involved that has been left alone/neglected.

41 of these reports related to children aged 13-17 and 17 reports for children in either the 0-5 or 6-12 age brackets.

There were 29 different children involved in these 17 reports which you have asked for specific detailed information about and in some cases, children from the same family (being left alone) fell in to more than one age bracket category (eg a child in the 0-5's and another in the 6-12's per-se).

For Q2 and Q3, the same “report” may feature in either answer if there are two or more children involved that feature in more than 1 designated age-bracket.

Where an individual has been charged it may have been for offences against more than one child.

There were 2 other occasions during this time period when an individual was subject to a positive Police outcome in respect of offences related to ill treatment or neglect of children. Both receiving Out of Court disposals as follows :-

- 2020 Female, 33 , Summons/Postal Requisition in respect of the following :-
Assault / ill-treat / neglect / abandon a child / young person to cause unnecessary suffering / injury (recordable**
- 2022 Male, 38 , Adult Conditional Caution in respect of the following :-
Cause assault / ill treatment / neglect / abandonment of child/young person to cause unnecessary suffering / injury**

Of the 58 individual reports received over this period, 23 reports (involving in total 32 children) have effectively been transferred to other bodies or agencies as they have the investigative primacy, not Wiltshire Police.

There are also 17 individual reports (involving 24 different children) within this 3-year time period which are still ongoing live investigations being undertaken by Wiltshire Police. It should be noted that these could result in further arrests/charges not reported above.

It is a well known fact that – sadly – false reports do get submitted to Police Forces when parents are estranged and children subject to the Family Court / Child Care process or, for instance, when neighbours are involved in ongoing disputes.

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