

WILTSHIRE POLICE



XXXXXXX
By email

**Force Disclosure Unit
Police Headquarters**
London Road
DEVIZES
Wiltshire
SN10 2DN

Date 9th June 2023

Our Ref FOI 2023-558

Dear XXXXX,

I write in connection with your request for information dated 22nd May 2023, concerning unlawful eviction 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 Force Policy Officer, Business Intelligence and Learning & Development 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:

Pursuant to s1(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, please provide me with:

1. The number of unlawful eviction allegations you have received within each of the preceding 5 years i.e. evictions contrary to section 1 of the Protection from Eviction Act 1977 (whether expressly stated as such or not).
2. Of those allegations, the number which have resulted in police investigations into breaches of s1 PEA in each of the preceding 5 years.
3. Of those investigations, the number which have resulted in prosecutions being brought by the police for breaches of s1 PEA in each of the preceding 5 years.
4. Of those investigations, the number which have been referred to a local authority for prosecution for breaches of s1 PEA in each of the preceding 5 years.
5. Copies of all local policies, protocols, standard operating procedures, etc, addressing how your officers should respond to allegations that an unlawful eviction is ongoing and/or has already taken place, including what steps officers should take to prevent tenants from being unlawfully evicted and how reports of unlawful eviction should be investigated.
6. Copies of all national policies, held by your organisation, addressing the same issues.

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7. Copies of all other materials used to train officers on these issues i.e. material provided or shown to the officers being trained and material provided solely to trainers.
8. Copies of any internal reports, memos, minutes of meetings, etc, held by your organisation and dated within the last 3 years regarding how your organisation responds to, or should respond to, unlawful evictions .

Our response:

Section 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) requires Wiltshire Police to confirm or deny whether the requested information is held. To establish whether the information is held - namely in relation to question 8 - would in itself exceed the time obligations placed upon the authority to comply (18 hours) and therefore engages section 12(2).

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.

Although excess cost removes the Forces' obligations under the Freedom of Information Act, as a gesture of goodwill I have supplied information, relative to your request, retrieved or available before it was realised that the fees limit would be exceeded. I trust this is helpful, but it does not affect our legal right to rely on the fees regulations for the remainder of your request. What I can provide you with is documented below:

Please note: Unlawful evictions are a civil matter.

1. The number of unlawful eviction allegations you have received within each of the preceding 5 years i.e. evictions contrary to section 1 of the Protection from Eviction Act 1977 (whether expressly stated as such or not).

Zero

2. Of those allegations, the number which have resulted in police investigations into breaches of s1 PEA in each of the preceding 5 years.

N/A

3. Of those investigations, the number which have resulted in prosecutions being brought by the police for breaches of s1 PEA in each of the proceeding 5 years.

N/A

4. Of those investigations, the number which have been referred to a local authority for prosecution for breaches of s1 PEA in each of the proceeding 5 years.

N/A

5. Copies of all local policies, protocols, standard operating procedures, etc, addressing how your officers should respond to allegations that an unlawful eviction is ongoing and/or has already taken place, including what steps officers should take to prevent tenants from being unlawfully evicted and how reports of unlawful eviction should be investigated.

The Force Policy Officer is not aware of any local policies, protocols, standard operating procedures etc relating to unlawful eviction.

Unlawful eviction is not a Police matter but a civil one and would be dealt with by the Local Authority. However, if there was a report of an offence committed at the time (i.e. physical violence), this would be dealt with by Police but for the offence committed not the allegation of unlawful eviction.

6. Copies of all national policies, held by your organisation, addressing the same issues.

As above. See [Private renting for tenants: evictions: Harassment and illegal evictions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/private-renting-for-tenants-evictions-harassment-and-illegal-evictions) for further information.

7. Copies of all other materials used to train officers on these issues i.e. material provided or shown to the officers being trained and material provided solely to trainers.

As unlawful eviction is a civil matter, this is not specified as a subject to deliver to Officers. Bailiffs, if using unlawful force to gain entry, would generate Police attendance if called to prevent a breach of the peace.

There is no formal training in the SCIL (Special's training) Phase 1 Course.

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

Phone: 01722 547081

Email: abigail.standidge@wiltshire.police.uk

Keeping Wiltshire Safe

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



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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/>

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