

WILTSHIRE POLICE



XXXXXXX
By email

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

Date 9th June 2023

Our Ref FOI 2023-599

Dear XXXXX,

I write in connection with your request for information dated 6th June 2023, concerning Prevent referrals.

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:

For each of the years 2017 to 2022, please could you provide a breakdown of all those referred by Wiltshire Police to Prevent by:

- a. ethnicity and gender;
- b. ethnicity and age; and
- c. ethnicity and type of concern giving rise to the referral.

Please could this data be provided in such a way that it is possible to analyse it intersectionally, particularly as between the three data categories of age, ethnicity and gender. We would like to be able to see, in particular, the ethnicity of females in each age group.

Please could you provide this information electronically as a dataset in Excel.

Our Response:

The information you are requesting is exempt by virtue of sections 24(1) - National Security and 31(1)(a)(b) - Law Enforcement of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Sections 24 and 31 are both prejudice-based, qualified exemptions and therefore require Wiltshire Police to establish the harm in disclosure, and the public interest for and against disclosure.

Overall Harm

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Publication of specific Prevent data would provide information to those who seek to challenge the process, which would not be in the public interest. Allegations of 'spying in the community' and 'targeting Muslims' misrepresent and undermine the intention of Prevent programme, which seeks to support those individuals vulnerable to being drawn into violent extremism. Figures on the ethnicity or age of participants may fuel perceived grievances, such as the view that young Muslims are being targeted or that the issue of political extremists (i.e. the far right) are not being tackled. Revealing detailed site-specific statistics could lead to the identification of:

- Individuals referred
- Those who may have referred individuals in confidence
- Local organisations working with the force to protect and safeguard those at risk
- Ongoing cases which could lead to the withdrawal of individuals from the process and thus threaten the successful conclusion of a case.

This would bring the process into disrepute, destroy trust and damage Prevent at a national level.

Prevent is a multi-agency process which aims to support those who may be vulnerable to being drawn into violent extremism. It works by providing a mechanism for:

- Identifying individuals who may be at risk of and vulnerable to being drawn into violent extremism
- Accessing the nature and extent of the risk
- Where necessary, referring cases to a multi-agency panel which decides on the most appropriate support package to divert and support the individual at risk.

Prevent aims to draw vulnerable individuals away from violent extremism before they become involved in criminal activity. Effective information sharing is crucial in ensuring that delivery partners, such as education, children's services, probation and local public health agencies and local community partners are able to build a comprehensive picture of an individual's vulnerability, and therefore provide the appropriate type and level of support to safeguard the individual at risk. This requires the local community to work in partnership with the police and other agencies and to share information appropriately and responsibly.

The security of the county is of paramount importance and Wiltshire Police will not divulge any information which would undermine national security or compromise law enforcement. 'Prevent' is part of the wider strand of CONTEST, the Government's counter terrorism strategy, and the information held by Wiltshire Police in regards to Prevent directly relates to counter-terrorism policing. In addition, any prejudice to counter-terrorism policing directly impacts on the police support and the delivery of CONTEST.

Any detailed breakdown of the agencies, authorities, or partners that made the referrals would lead to these partners disengaging from the referral process, as well as, potentially in some extreme cases, aid the identification of those involved in the referral process itself, or of those referred.

A list of the local organisations and agencies who may be involved in Prevent can be found in the Prevent Strategy: An Updated Guide for Local Partners : [Delivering the Prevent Strategy](#).

Public Interest Considerations

Section 24

Factors favouring disclosure

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The public are entitled to know how public funds are spent and, by disclosing this information, the public would be able to see where public money is being spent and know that forces are doing as much as they can to combat terrorism and radicalisation. Revealing this information would enable the public to have some reassurance that the Government's Counter Terrorism strategy is robust. This is an issue high on the public agenda and therefore the release of this information would contribute to an informed public debate.

Factors against disclosure

PREVENT only operates in specific locations. Revealing detailed statistics may increase interest in cases which could ultimately lead to the identity of individuals and the organisations we work with, which may assist others intending to counter such work. Identification of those working locally to deliver the aims and objectives of PREVENT could enable those wishing to counter such work to engage in activity to disrupt and jeopardise the successful delivery of ongoing work. This could threaten the successful delivery of PREVENT and the government's counter terrorism strategy and lead to the public being at increased risk from terrorism. There is also a potential for such data to be used to increase community tensions in an area, which would not be in the public interest.

Any information shared between agencies (intelligence) has the potential to cover all aspects of criminal activity, be it threats to National Security, future planned robberies or intelligence relating to terrorist activity. Disclosure of the information would enable those intent on engaging in terrorist activities to determine on a National level which areas within the UK may be a vulnerable area to target.

Section 31

Factors favouring disclosure

There may be a public interest in the release of this information because it may reassure the public that there are effective processes in place to ensure that people showing signs that they intend to use violence, or other illegal means, are monitored proactively and assessed for the presence of vulnerability. Disclosure of the information would provide reassurance to the public that the Police have in place protocols to deal with these types of incidents and offences. The Home Office regularly publishes national statistics on PREVENT data. It would also reassure the public that the police have protocols in place to protect children from being drawn into violent extremism.

Home Office Official Statistics : [Individuals referred to and supported through the prevent program](#)

Factors against disclosure

Disclosure of information would mean that law enforcement tactics would be compromised which would hinder the prevention and detection of crime. More crime would be committed because criminals would know which forces are focusing on the Prevent programme. A fear of crime would be realised because if the terrorists identified more vulnerable areas, they could target and exploit these areas and the public would be in fear of more criminal / terrorist activity occurring. There would be an impact on police resources because if the measure used by forces to detect terrorist activities and safeguard children is disclosed, and some areas are deemed to be 'softer' at managing this threat, terrorist cells may target these areas in order to continue their operations and target vulnerable individuals. There could be local implications with wrongful identification of children and families which in turn could lead to further offences being committed in the community.

Balance Test

The security of the country is of paramount importance and the Police service will not divulge information if to do so would place the safety of an individual at risk or undermine National Security. Whilst there is a public interest in the transparency of policing operations, information gathering and Keeping Wiltshire Safe

in this case providing assurance that the police service is appropriately and effectively safeguarding those who are vulnerable to radicalisation and targeting the cells behind the radicalisation, there is a very strong public interest in safeguarding both national security and the integrity of police investigations and operations in the highly sensitive area of terrorism.

As much as there is public interest in knowing that policing activity is appropriate and balanced in matters of national security this will only be overridden in exceptional circumstances. Whilst there is a strong public interest in the transparency of policing programmes and in this case, providing assurance that the police service and other stakeholders are appropriately and effectively engaging with one another, combating the threat posed by individuals with the intent to use violence and other illegal means, there is a very strong public interest in safeguarding both national security and the integrity of the stakeholders within the programme.

Wiltshire Police will not divulge information if it is likely that it will compromise the work of the Police Service or place members of the public at risk. It is known that terrorist cells will try to radicalise people and children, to indoctrinate them with their ideology in order to encourage them to commit acts of terror. Disclosure of the requested information would highlight which forces may have individuals who are more susceptible to radicalisation and how each force tackles this within their communities. This will adversely affect Wiltshire Police's ability to detect this type of crime as it may alter the behaviours of those preying on vulnerable individuals. This in itself could put the individual's life at risk along with that of National Security. It is therefore our belief that the balance test lies in favour of not disclosing the information.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Constabulary, when refusing to provide 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.

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 this letter acts as a Refusal Notice for those aspects of your request.

Exemptions applied:

Section 24(1) - National Security
Section 31(1)(a)(b) - Law Enforcement

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,

Abigail Standidge

Phone: 01722 547081

Email: abigail.standidge@wiltshire.police.uk

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 Fol 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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