



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

Date: 18th November 2024

Ref: FOI 2024/950

Dear,

I write in connection with your request for information dated 26th October 2024 concerning reports of female genital mutilation.

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 now able to respond as follows.

You wrote:

Please can you supply me data on how many cases of Femal Genital Mutilation (FGM) were reported to you between 2000 and 2024.

Our response:

For the year 2024, Wiltshire Police can neither confirm nor deny whether information relevant to this request is held, as the duty in Section 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 does not apply by virtue of the following exemption:

- Section 31(3) – Law Enforcement

Section 31 is a prejudice-based qualified exemption and any prejudice (harm) that confirming or denying information is held would cause must be articulated as well as the public interest considerations.

Harm in confirming or denying that information is held –

Under the Act, we cannot, and do not request the motives of any application for information. We have no doubt that the vast majority of requests made under the Act are legitimate and the applicants do not have any ulterior motives. However, in disclosing information to one applicant, we are expressing a willingness to provide it to anyone in the

Proud to serve and protect our communities

world. This means that a disclosure to a genuinely interested and concerned person automatically opens it up for a similar disclosure, including those who would use the information to gain an advantage over our ability to exercise our core function which is law enforcement. Consideration has been given to the potential harm that could be caused by confirming or denying whether such information is held for the year 2024. The Police service is charged with enforcing the law, preventing and detecting crime and protecting the communities we serve. Confirmation or denial of whether there is information held pertaining to reports of female genital mutilation (FGM) for the year 2024, would be invaluable to those with criminal intent, as this would allow offenders to be in a position to determine whether or not Wiltshire Police are aware of their offending and allow them the opportunity to use this knowledge to their own advantage in furthering criminal activity around the force. If those with criminal intent were to use the information to their own advantage, it would significantly impact our core law enforcement function which is the prevention and detection of crime as well as significantly increasing the risk of harm to individuals.

Public Interest Considerations –

Section 31

Factors favouring complying with Section 1(1)(a)

Factors favouring the confirmation or denial of whether this information is held for the year 2024 would include better public awareness regarding FGM, which may reduce crime as well as potentially lead to more information coming to us from the public surrounding this offence.

Factors against complying with Section 1(1)(a) (neither confirming nor denying that information is held)

Factors favouring neither confirming nor denying whether this information is held for the year 2024, would be that this would assist us in maintaining our law enforcement capabilities because if we were to confirm or deny whether this information is held for 2024, this could highlight to an offender that the Police are or are not aware of their offending behaviour, thereby compromising law enforcement tactics and leading to more crime being committed. Confirmation or denial of whether this information is held for the year 2024 may also lead to community tension or unrest dependent on what information may be held as a result. Not only this, but the public have a high expectation that any information/intelligence that may have been provided to the Police will be treated with confidence and anything that places that confidence at risk would undermine the trust that individuals have in the Police. In turn, this could potentially affect Wiltshire Police's ability to prevent and detect crime, which would have an adverse effect on the safety of the communities it serves. As well as this, there is a strong need to consider that any potential victims of these crimes are extremely vulnerable which strengthens our case to neither confirm nor deny whether such information is held for the year 2024.

Balancing Test –

The points above highlight the merits of confirming or denying, whether any information pertinent to this request exists for the year 2024. The Police service is charged with enforcing the law, preventing and detecting crime and protecting the communities we serve. As part of that policing purpose, various intelligence may or may not be being

Proud to serve and protect our communities

handled. The Police Service will never divulge whether or not information pertinent to this request does or does not exist, if to do so would place the safety of an individual at risk, compromise an ongoing investigation or undermine the policing purpose in the effective delivery of operational law enforcement. Whilst there is a strong public interest in better awareness of FGM offences, there is very strong public interest in maintaining effective law enforcement.

Therefore, at this moment in time, it is our opinion that for these issues the balance test for confirming nor denying that information is held, is appropriate.

No inference can be taken from this refusal that the information requested for the year 2024 does or does not exist.

However, for the previous years requested, I can confirm that we do hold the following information:

Between 2006 and the end of 2023, there has been 1 report of FGM which was made in 2018. However, please be aware that the crime for this report was cancelled after establishing that FGM had in fact not taken place. Please also note, that the earliest data we can access easily dates back to 2006 and not from 2000 as requested, and if we were to try to obtain this data for the years 2000 – 2006, then further exemptions may still apply in terms of time/cost it would take to achieve.

Such offences are rarely reported to the Police, and reported offences are different to information raised from third parties and/or other statutory agencies which would lead to a multi-agency assessment and/or further safeguarding activity.

Wiltshire Police actively works with partner agencies in respect of offences of honour-based violence and is committed to working with all communities to prevent incidents of forced marriage or FGM. Despite the low numbers of offences recorded for the years 2006 – 2023, the Force is constantly looking at improving the confidence of communities and individuals to come forward and report such matters.

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 31(3) – Law Enforcement

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.

Proud to serve and protect our communities

Yours sincerely,

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

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.

Proud to serve and protect our communities

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

Website : <https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/>