



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

Date: 10th December 2024

Ref: FOI 2024/1067

Dear,

I write in connection with your request for information dated 29th November 2024 concerning report of abuse linked to faith or belief.

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 after having consulted our Business Intelligence team – I am now able to respond as follows.

You wrote & our response:

For context, this request is related to crimes of abuse linked to faith or belief as defined by the Metropolitan Police in the link below (the Met's definition is specially about children whereas I am looking at cases involving children and/or adults) - <https://www.met.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/caa/child-abuse/faith-based-abuse>. It states: "Abuse linked to faith or belief is where concerns for a (person's) welfare have been identified, and could be caused by, a belief in witchcraft, spirit or demonic possession, ritual or satanic abuse features; or when practices linked to faith or belief are harmful to a (person)."

Abuse linked to faith or belief is also defined here in this government national action plan - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175437/Action_Plan_-_Abuse_linked_to_Faith_or_Belief.pdf

For each calendar year 2021, 2022, 2023 and for the period 1st January 2024 to 28th November 2024, please could you tell me:

- 1) The number of cases of abuse linked to faith or belief (as defined above) that have been reported
2021 – 25.
2022 – 24.
2023 – 60.

2024 (01/01/24 – 28/11/24) – 38.

- 2) A brief description of each case and the outcome if known (i.e. arrest, charge, on bail, no further action, etc)

Reported Month & Year	Short Description	Outcome
Feb-2021	Verbal abuse	20: Other body/agency has investigation primacy
Feb-2021	Verbal abuse	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Feb-2021	Item sent to IP's home address	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Mar-2021	Threats via email	16: Victim declines/withdraws support - named suspect identified
Mar-2021	Threats via email	16: Victim declines/withdraws support - named suspect identified
Mar-2021	Offensive social media post	Cancelled/transferred
Mar-2021	Offensive graffiti	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Apr-2021	Verbal abuse	14: Victim declines/unable to support action to identify offender
May-2021	Verbal abuse	16: Victim declines/withdraws support - named suspect identified
Jun-2021	Verbal abuse	16: Victim declines/withdraws support - named suspect identified
Jun-2021	Offensive graffiti	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Jul-2021	Vandalism	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Jul-2021	Theft	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Aug-2021	Verbal abuse	17: Suspect identified but prosecution time limit expired
Sep-2021	Verbal abuse	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Sep-2021	Verbal abuse	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Sep-2021	Offensive graffiti	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties

Oct-2021	Verbal abuse	16: Victim declines/withdraws support - named suspect identified
Oct-2021	Offensive gesture	8: Youth restorative disposal
Nov-2021	Verbal abuse	16: Victim declines/withdraws support - named suspect identified
Nov-2021	Offensive messages	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Nov-2021	Physical assault	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Nov-2021	Displaying offensive flag	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Dec-2021	Offensive graffiti	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Oct-2021	Verbal abuse	16: Victim declines/withdraws support - named suspect identified
Feb-2022	Verbal abuse	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Feb-2022	Physical assault	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Feb-2022	Offensive messages	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Feb-2022	Threats via social media	Cancelled/transferred
Mar-2022	Verbal abuse	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Apr-2022	Verbal abuse	1: Charged
Apr-2022	Offensive graffiti	Cancelled/transferred
May-2022	Physical assault	20: Other body/agency has investigation primacy
May-2022	Verbal abuse	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Jun-2022	Verbal abuse	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Jun-2022	Offensive messages	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Jul-2022	Offensive messages	Cancelled/transferred
Jul-2022	Verbal abuse	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Jul-2022	Verbal abuse	16: Victim declines/withdraws support - named suspect identified

Aug-2022	Offensive graffiti	Cancelled/transferred
Sep-2022	Offensive graffiti	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Sep-2022	Verbal abuse	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Oct-2022	Offensive social media post	1: Charged
Nov-2022	Verbal abuse	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Nov-2022	Verbal abuse	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Nov-2022	Offensive social media post	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Dec-2022	Verbal abuse	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Dec-2022	Verbal abuse	14: Victim declines/unable to support action to identify offender
Jan-2023	Vandalism	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Dec-2022	Verbal abuse	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Jan-2023	Threats via message	Cancelled/transferred
Jan-2023	Threats via email	Cancelled/transferred
Jan-2023	Verbal abuse	Cancelled/transferred
Jan-2023	Verbal abuse	Cancelled/transferred
Feb-2023	Verbal abuse	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Feb-2023	Verbal threats	1: Charged
Feb-2023	Physical assault	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Feb-2023	Verbal abuse	16: Victim declines/withdraws support - named suspect identified
Feb-2023	Verbal abuse	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Mar-2023	Offensive social media post	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Mar-2023	Displaying offensive flag	Cancelled/transferred
Mar-2023	Verbal abuse	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Mar-2023	Offensive social media post	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties

Mar-2023	Offensive social media post	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Mar-2023	Offensive social media post	Cancelled/transferred
Apr-2023	Offensive social media post	New
Apr-2023	Offensive social media post	New
Apr-2023	Verbal abuse	Cancelled/transferred
Apr-2023	Offensive social media post	Cancelled/transferred
May-2023	Vandalism	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
May-2023	Verbal abuse	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
May-2023	Vandalism	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Jun-2023	Offensive social media post	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Jun-2023	Verbal abuse	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Jun-2023	Verbal abuse	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Jul-2023	Verbal abuse	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Jul-2023	Offensive social media post	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Jul-2023	Offensive graffiti	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Jul-2023	Vandalism	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Aug-2023	Theft	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Aug-2023	Verbal abuse	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Aug-2023	Physical assault	Cancelled/transferred
Aug-2023	Verbal abuse	16: Victim declines/withdraws support - named suspect identified
Aug-2023	Verbal abuse	1: Charged
Aug-2023	Offensive social media post	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties

Aug-2023	Vandalism	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Aug-2023	Offensive messages	Cancelled/transferred
Sep-2023	Vandalism	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Sep-2023	Physical assault	17: Suspect identified but prosecution time limit expired
Oct-2023	Offensive social media post	1A: Alternate offence summonsed/postal requisition
Oct-2023	Verbal abuse	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Oct-2023	Offensive social media post	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Oct-2023	Verbal abuse	16: Victim declines/withdraws support - named suspect identified
Oct-2023	Vandalism	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Oct-2023	Physical assault	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Oct-2023	Verbal abuse	16: Victim declines/withdraws support - named suspect identified
Oct-2023	Vandalism	16: Victim declines/withdraws support - named suspect identified
Nov-2023	Offensive social media post	1A: Alternate offence summonsed/postal requisition
Nov-2023	Verbal abuse	14: Victim declines/unable to support action to identify offender
Nov-2023	Verbal abuse	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Nov-2023	Verbal abuse	15: CPS - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Nov-2023	Verbal abuse	1: Charged
Nov-2023	Offensive messages	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Nov-2023	Verbal abuse	1: Charged
Nov-2023	Verbal abuse	14: Victim declines/unable to support action to identify offender
Dec-2023	Verbal abuse	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Dec-2023	Offensive social media post	1A: Alternate offence summonsed/postal requisition
Dec-2023	Verbal abuse	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties

Dec-2023	Offensive social media post	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Jan-2024	Offensive social media post	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Jan-2024	Verbal abuse	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Jan-2024	Offensive social media post	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Feb-2024	Verbal abuse	8: Youth restorative disposal
Feb-2024	Physical assault	16: Victim declines/withdraws support - named suspect identified
Feb-2024	Verbal abuse	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Feb-2024	Offensive social media post	New
Feb-2024	Vandalism	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Apr-2024	Offensive messages	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Apr-2024	Verbal abuse	8: Youth restorative disposal
Apr-2024	Offensive social media post	1A: Alternate offence charged
May-2024	Verbal abuse	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
May-2024	Verbal abuse	12: Named suspect too ill to prosecute
May-2024	Verbal abuse	12: Named suspect too ill to prosecute
May-2024	Offensive graffiti	16: Victim declines/withdraws support - named suspect identified
May-2024	Verbal abuse	16: Victim declines/withdraws support - named suspect identified
Jun-2024	Offensive graffiti	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Jun-2024	Verbal abuse	3A: Alternate offence adult caution
Jul-2024	Verbal abuse	New
Jul-2024	Physical assault	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Jul-2024	Offensive messages	16: Victim declines/withdraws support - named suspect identified

Aug-2024	Offensive social media post	8: Community resolution
Aug-2024	Physical assault	20: Other body/agency has investigation primacy
Aug-2024	Verbal abuse	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Aug-2024	Verbal abuse	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Aug-2024	Offensive graffiti	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Aug-2024	Verbal abuse	12: Named suspect too ill to prosecute
Aug-2024	Verbal abuse	New
Aug-2024	Offensive graffiti	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Sep-2024	Verbal abuse	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Sep-2024	Verbal abuse	New
Oct-2024	Offensive graffiti	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Oct-2024	Verbal abuse	1: Summoned/postal requisition
Oct-2024	Offensive graffiti	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Oct-2024	Offensive graffiti	New
Nov-2024	Verbal abuse	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Nov-2024	Offensive gesture	New
Nov-2024	Offensive messages	New

- 3) The number of crime reports where the term "witch", or "witchcraft", or "demon", or "exorcism" is mentioned in the MO field of the crime report
33.
- 4) A brief description of each reported crime from your answer to question 3) and the outcome if known (i.e. arrest, charge, on bail, no further action, etc)

Reported Month & Year	Short Description	Outcome
Feb-2021	Verbal abuse	20: Other body/agency has investigation primacy
Feb-2021	Verbal abuse	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Mar-2021	Verbal abuse	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Nov-2021	Verbal abuse	20: Other body/agency has investigation primacy
Nov-2021	Threatening messages	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties

Nov-2021	Threatening messages	1: Summoned/postal requisition
Jan-2022	Threatening messages	16: Victim declines/withdraws support - named suspect identified
Jan-2022	Threatening messages	16: Victim declines/withdraws support - named suspect identified
Feb-2022	Verbal abuse	12: Named suspect too ill to prosecute
Apr-2022	Verbal abuse	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Nov-2021	Threatening messages	1A: Alternate offence summoned/postal requisition
Jun-2022	Verbal abuse	16: Victim declines/withdraws support - named suspect identified
Jun-2022	Verbal abuse	16: Victim declines/withdraws support - named suspect identified
Jun-2022	Verbal abuse	16: Victim declines/withdraws support - named suspect identified
Jun-2022	Verbal abuse	16: Victim declines/withdraws support - named suspect identified
Oct-2022	Verbal abuse	16: Victim declines/withdraws support - named suspect identified
Oct-2022	Abusive messages	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Dec-2022	Verbal abuse	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Dec-2022	Verbal abuse	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Jul-2023	Abusive messages	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Oct-2023	Threatening messages	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified
Oct-2023	Verbal abuse	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Jan-2024	Verbal abuse	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Feb-2024	Verbal abuse	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Feb-2024	Verbal abuse	8: Community resolution

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May-2024	Verbal abuse	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Jun-2024	Verbal abuse	1A: Alternate offence charged
Jun-2024	Verbal abuse	New
Mar-2021	Threatening messages	1: Charged
Dec-2021	Offensive social media post	16: Victim declines/withdraws support - named suspect identified
Feb-2022	Offensive messages	15: Police - named suspect, victim supports but evidential difficulties
Dec-2023	Offensive social media post	1A: Alternate offence summonsed/postal requisition
Apr-2024	Offensive messages	18: Investigation complete no suspect identified

Caveats:

- Some occurrences may be counted under both questions 1 and 3.
- Data for questions 1 and 2 were selected by NICL Qualifier: Prejudice – Religion.
- Data for questions 3 and 4 selected by wildcard search, and then each crime report was read manually in order to remove any reports not relevant. For example, the wildcard search 'witch' returns occurrences of Nintendo Switch being stolen. Also, as you may be aware, wildcard searches are not a reliable way of obtaining information accurately. This is because the system searches for particular words within the summary of the incident and no further. Therefore, please do bear in mind that there may have been other occurrences involving the words you mentioned above, that might not have been mentioned within the summary of the occurrence but within the crime report itself, and as a result this, unfortunately, this would not have been picked up on from the wildcard search requested. The other issue with wildcard searches is that the terms requested to be searched on could bring back data that might be out of context to the information you are after (however, in this case, as stipulated above, due to the low numbers of reports that relate these were manually read in order to obtain the ones that were relevant to your request). Therefore, please do bear these things in mind when looking at this information.

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,

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.

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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/>