

**Force Disclosure Unit**

Wiltshire Police HQ

London Road

Devizes

Wiltshire

SN10 2DN

Tel 101 ext 62005

www.wiltshire.police.ukdisclosure@wiltshire.pnn.police.uk

XXXXXX – by email

Date: 13th February 2025

Your ref: FOI

Our ref: FOI 2025 / 397

Reply contact name is: Nick Penny

Dear XXXXXX,

I write in connection with your request for information dated 14th April 2025 concerning Group-Based Child Sexual Exploitation and CAWN's.

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:

- a) The number of cases with a 'CSE flag' applied for the calendar years 2020 - 2024.
- b) A breakdown by ethnicity of perpetrators for those cases applied a CSE flag.
- c) The number of "live" group-based CSE investigations led by your force for the years 2020 - 2024, including those progressing through the criminal justice system. "Group based", in this context, means those crimes involving two or more offenders. If possible, broken down by the number of individuals in each "group"/gang.
- d) The number of safeguarding referrals received 2020 - 2024 for children because of sexual exploitation concerns.
- e) The number of Child Abduction Warning Notices (CAWN) issued to adults 2014 - 2025, and a breakdown by ethnicity of those presented with one.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Our response:

The information that you are requesting for the majority of your request (namely questions C, D and E) is not stored in a way which permits easy retrieval.

You have requested information in relation to group-based CSE offences dating back a total of 5 years.

Wiltshire Police record crime in accordance with current Home Office crime recording codes and crime categories. Group-Based CSE is not currently a specific crime category under which offences of that nature can be recorded in isolation and separately from other Sexual Offences. There will undoubtedly be many records on our systems that might be related to CSE or group-based CSE.

Whilst our crime recording system(s) are fairly sophisticated and we have a number of dedicated fields in which we record various details related to a crime (and which we can then theoretically run searches on) we do not have such a field in which we record whether there was more than one individual suspect involved in a specific case.

In addition, whilst we have a flag against offences in which we can record whether or not CSE is involved or suspected, this field is not mandatory and – as a consequence – there is a very high likelihood that the data contained in it is not reliable, particular given the fact that populating that field would not necessarily be a force priority as investigations are undertaken and the possibility of multiple offenders and/or group-based offending being apparent.

Wiltshire Police would never knowingly place information into the public domain (as this response would be) that they knew was incorrect or not representative.

Our information is set up and searchable for our own policing purposes. To determine how many investigations into group-based child sexual exploitation that Wiltshire Police have carried out since 2020, will require us to manually review, extensively and in detail, all relevant crime records on our current systems.

For the time period you require, Wiltshire Police have recorded – in excess of 9,000 individual sex offences. Even allowing a conservative 3 minutes per record to review the cases relevant for **just one calendar year** it would take 90 hours to complete, which 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.

To provide the number of suspects arrested as part of these investigations and the number subsequently involved in a given “gang” would further exceed the appropriate limit.

It should also be noted that there is no obligation on an Authority under FOIA to create new data where none currently exists, purely to answer an FOI request.

With regard to the number of safeguarding referrals received, our crime recording system(s) do not include a field in which we can record whether a referral has been received #(or for what particular reason). This information would only be held within the narrative of the occurrence log of a reported crime or incident. To obtain the information you require for the 5 year period you are requesting would necessitate each and every crime record being located and read. Given the number involved, this would also exceed time-cost obligations in itself.

Similarly, with regard to CAWN's issued, the information you are requesting is also not stored in a way which permits for easy retrieval. CAWNs can be issued by any department and Wiltshire Police do not have a central register for the number that have been issued. Although there is a flag for CAWNs on our Niche system, the use of this flag is neither mandatory or reliable – and therefore any searches will likely return inaccurate results. This will be down to human error i.e. not adding the flag when it should have been added etc. This has been raised as an issue, due to no way of monitoring this, and ways are being looked into to improve this. Therefore, to provide an accurate response to your request would require manually reviewing every occurrence over the last 12 years to determine whether or not it is relevant to your request. This in itself would require manually reviewing hundreds of thousands of reports and also exceed time-cost obligations.

Please also note that if one part of the request engages a Section 12 response, then ordinarily the whole request should 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.

However, 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 am able to provide you are the answers documented below :-

Question A

Reported.Year	Occurrences	Crimes	Incidents
2020	244	143	101
2021	165	112	53
2022	424	331	93
2023	509	377	132
2024	411	293	118
	1753	1256	497

Question B

PrimarySelfDefinedRace	Occurrences
A1. Asian Indian inc Asian British	7
A2. Asian Pakistani inc Asian British	3
A3. Asian Bangladeshi inc Asian British	5
A9. Any other Asian background	7
B1. Black Caribbean inc Black British	6
B2. Black African inc Black British	11
B9. Any other Black background	5
M1. Mixed White & Black Caribbean	5
M2. Mixed White & Black African	4
M9. Any other mixed	6
O2. Arab	1
O9. Any other	5
W1. White British	558
W2. White Irish	3
W3. White Gypsy or Irish Traveller	1
W9. Any other white background	18
NS. Not stated	99
NULL	179

Ordinarily under our section 16 duty to provide advice and assistance, we would advise you how to refine your request in respect of questions C, D and E to a more manageable level. However, due to the difficulties outlined above, I cannot see how this can be achieved in this particular case.

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 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.

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