

23rd August 2017

Freedom of Information Request – Reference No:20171287

REQUEST

- 1. Shop name and/or location of each incident of shoplifting reported in May of this year (01/05/2017 to 31/05/2017)**
- 2. The number of arrests for shoplifting within the time period given above**
- 3. The theft value in each incident reported in May of this year (01/05/2017 to 31/05/2017)**

CLARIFICATION

Please could you clarify the following point(s): -

- 1) You are requesting details of shoplifting incidents. South Yorkshire Police incidents are recorded on our Incident Management System which records the majority of matters / incidents requiring the specific deployment of police resources, whether reported by members of the public or 'happened upon' by officers and staff in the course of their duties. Each record is a log of events as the incident progresses or unfolds, with very few search fields to extract any meaningful data within the 18 hour cost threshold. It is very likely that the whole request will be exempt under section 12 – Appropriate Limit. With this in mind, would you prefer to receive data relating to recorded crimes within this time period as an alternative?
- 2) It is extremely unlikely that we will be in a position to disclose the shop name / or location of each incident within this short time period without engaging Section 40 – Personal Information. Depending on the returned numbers, we may be able to provide the area or district. Please advise if this is acceptable.

REPLY

Thanks for the swift reply, happy to move ahead with recorded crimes. With point two, I'd contest that a business name could be personal data as exempt under Section 40, could you explain this?

I fear that if I was to ask for expanded time period in order to get the list of company names, this would then cross the 18 hour threshold? Could you inform me of a reasonable period that would allow the business names to be listed while falling under the 18 hour limit?

CLARIFICATION

Recorded crimes – noted

Re names of a business. It is not the name of a business that is the issue... The term 'personal data' means data that relates to a living individual who can be identified ie by disclosing the name of a shop within a very short time period such as a month, if there is say only one incident of shoplifting it is possible to ascertain by circumstances, who that person is likely to be. I will assess this risk upon return of the data – it may be that I can present the data in a way in which this risk can be mitigated.

The retrieval of data from the crime management system is not likely to exceed the cost threshold if the time period is increased. I cannot comment on whether this would make any difference to what can be disclosed until the data is returned.

Please advise how you would like to proceed.

REPLY

What I'm trying to ascertain from the data is the balance of reported shoplifting incidents at independent retailers versus chain retailers (on a national level), therefore the time period itself was chosen as a practicality rather than a necessity, so happy to expand it to six months? Can we go from 1 December to 31 May for all points?

RESPONSE

I approached our Incident Management System Administrator and Custody Handling System (CHS) Administrator for assistance with your request. The CMS system is used to record complaints or allegations of those matters, which the Home Office specify should be recorded as 'crimes' and the CHS system records arrests data.

A search of the respective systems was conducted using the criteria above. I can confirm that South Yorkshire Police holds information relating to the criteria of your request, but having reviewed this in detail, I am not prepared to disclose this to you in full.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires South Yorkshire 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 following exemption applies to the disclosure of the information:

Section 40(2) Personal Information

This is an absolute exemption and therefore a Public Interest Test is not relevant. However, for clarity, I will explain my rationale for engaging this exemption.

Section 40(2) provides that information is exempt if it is the personal data of someone other than the applicant and disclosure would breach any of the data protection principles. The term 'personal data' means data that relates to a living individual who can be identified. Information disclosed under the Freedom of Information Act is disclosed into the public domain, effectively to the world, not just to one individual. Although not explicitly naming individuals, the cumulative effect of a full disclosure ie business name, location and date of a shoplifting incident would be likely to lead to the identification of those involved. This would be breaching the right to privacy afforded to persons under the Data Protection Act 1998.

With this in mind, I am prepared to disclose as much detail as possible without compromising the identity of anyone involved.

I approached the Administrators for our Crime Management System (CMS) and the Custody Handling System (CHS) for assistance with your request.

The CMS system is used to record complaints or allegations of those matters, which the Home Office specify should be recorded as 'crimes'. The CHS systems records arrest data.

They were able to provide me with data from which the attached spreadsheet has been compiled.

Our CMS Administrator provided data for Questions 1 and 3 and has given the below explanation of her search:

I have provided a count of the Home Office offence class – SHOPLIFTING where property has been recorded as stolen and the offence was recorded between 01-Jan-2017 and 30-Jun-2017, broken down by the month the offence was recorded and the Scene of Crime house name. The scene of crime house name is a free text field, therefore spelling mistakes\variations will be present.

Of the above count, I have provided a total value of property stolen for each offence recorded, please note all but 13 items were recorded as an estimated value.

On the "Offence by Scene of Crime" I have removed names of any retailers which I believe may be independent/family run businesses to negate any risk of being able to identify any individual.