

July 2 2019

Freedom of Information Request - Reference No: 20191390

REQUEST

1. How many people does your force have in each of the following roles:
 - a. Police Officer (Detective or Constable, including Specials)
 - b. PCSO
 - c. Other Police staff
2. How many staff have criminal convictions?
 - a. How many are Police Officers (Detective or Constable, including Specials)?
 - b. How many are PCSOs?
 - c. How many are other Police staff?
3. Please provide the following information for each conviction:
 - a. The person's role and/or rank
 - b. The offence
 - c. Whether the person received a custodial sentence (suspended or otherwise)
 - d. Whether the person was convicted before they joined the police

RESPONSE

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 12(2) – Exemption where cost of compliance exceeds appropriate limit

We have received similar requests of this nature in the past. Our Force Vetting Manager has previously advised that the Vetting Unit may hold some pertinent information. However, it is not in a format easily retrievable by electronic means and to manually retrieve would exceed the Appropriate Limit. He explains:

'A search of the dedicated force vetting management system, in use since September 2014, reveals 7,594 records of completed cases resulting in vetting clearance. Of these, 3,667 relate to police officers (regular and Special Constabulary) and Police Staff (including PCSOs).

Between October 2005 and September 2014, a spreadsheet database recorded the details of applicants and progress of cases. Whilst this database details the granting or refusal of clearance, it does not record the results of the various searches and enquiries that contribute to the vetting process or the rationale behind clearance decisions. A substantial majority of cases relating to police officers and police staff were converted from the spreadsheet to the new management system. However, data recording practices resulted in the failure of some cases to convert. Consequently, Vetting Unit staff still occasionally have to search the previous database. Additionally, cost considerations meant that only the identity of the

vetting subject, level of clearance together and dates relevant to the management of review or renewal processes were converted.

Until June 2012, paper records stored in individual files held the results of searches, enquiries and clearance rationales. Thereafter, search and enquiry results, together with clearance rationales are stored in individual electronic folders.

The vetting case management system records the progress of searches and enquiries and alerts decision makers to the existence of adverse traces. However, in the case of criminal convictions, these traces are not categorised by individual offence. Vetting officers save search results to the above-mentioned electronic folders with free-text summaries entered in the management system. There is no capability to conduct a general system search of these free-text entries.

Therefore, in order to locate, retrieve and extract the requested information it would be necessary to search each of the 3,667 paper or electronic files. Even if each search took only one minute (and that is an impossibly optimistic estimate), the total time required would exceed 61 hours. In the case of paper records, a single search and review could take 20 minutes or longer.

The NPCC (formerly ACPO) National Vetting Policy for the Police Community currently governs police vetting. Standard Operating Procedure 8 (SOP 8) of that policy refers to consideration of convictions and cautions held by vetting subjects. Appendix A to SOP 8 provides criteria and guidance when considering such matters.

The Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004 provide that the cost limit for non-central government public authorities is £450. This must be calculated at the rate of £25 per hour, providing an effective time limit of 18 hours. . If you feel your endeavours can be achieved within the appropriate limit by refining your request, South Yorkshire Police would be more than happy to consider any further request.

Guidance from the Information Commissioner to public authorities is that where one part of a request is reasonably estimated to exceed the appropriate limit then the authority is not obliged to consider or comply with the remainder of the request up to the point at which the appropriate limit has been reached. Please note point 30 of the below link:-

https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/1199/costs_of_compliance_exceeds_appropriate_limit.pdf