

11 January 2019

Freedom of Information Request - Reference No: 20182339

REQUEST

I would like to know the number of reports of ritualistic or faith-based/linked abuse/witchcraft your force has seen over the past five years, details of these cases, and the number of arrests and convictions which followed.

I would like this information broken down by annual year for every year from 2013 to 2018 (for 2018 please include statistics to date).

Please present the information clearly. For example:

- 1)2013: XXX reports of cases.
- 2)Details of reported cases: XXX
- 3)Number of arrests: XXX (if there are arrests please include on what charges these arrests were made)
- 4)Number of convictions following arrests: XXX (please specify exactly what individuals were convicted for)

Please provide as much detail as possible about the individual reported cases, as in this local newspaper link:

<https://www.lancashiretelegraph.co.uk/news/national/11520976.witchcraft-child-abuse-cases-rise/>

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

Information relating to your request, if held, could be located on a number of different recording systems used by South Yorkshire Police. As there is no specific search category or offence which would readily identify cases specific to your request, the only way in which we would be able to locate any would be to conduct word searches within the free text fields of the various systems which have this capability, or manually review all hate crime and hate incidents which have a religious aggravating factor. This would then require a manual trawl through each record to ascertain whether any were pertinent to your request. The process of establishing if we even hold any information in relation to your request would far exceed the 18 hour cost threshold.

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