

22nd January 2021

Freedom of Information Request - Reference No: 20202706

REQUEST

1. **How many police officers in your force were working in schools as of 1st January in the following years? This could be a named officer, a liaison officer either working in or responsible for a school:**
 - a. 2016
 - b. 2017
 - c. 2018
 - d. 2019
 - e. 2020 to date

2. **How many complaints were received by your police force about school based police officers identified in the answer to question 1 in each of the years (please also describe the nature of the complaint):**
 - a. 2016
 - b. 2017
 - c. 2018
 - d. 2019
 - e. 2020 to date

3. **Can you explain your force's interaction with school-aged children and or college/sixth form students? If any, what interactions do your officers undertake in places of education?**

Clarification request

South Yorkshire Police has received similar requests to yours in the past. All such requests and responses are published on the Force Disclosure Log, which can be found on the South Yorkshire Police website at: -

<https://www.southyorkshire.police.uk/find-out/accessing-information/>

You may find that research of the Log may be worthwhile prior to submitting future requests as this may well result in the information being available immediately rather than any delay resulting from the process of responding to a request under the Act. In particular, we would draw your attention to the following entry: -

<https://www.southyorkshire.police.uk/find-out/accessing-information/request-information-under-the-freedom-of-information-act/school-based-officers-ref-20201939/>

You may also find the following link useful:-

<https://www.southyorkshire.police.uk/about-us/our-standards/misconduct-findings/>

Response to Clarification

I would like to go ahead with my FOI request as my questions were more specific and the language in the FOI you sent a link to is much more vague. Additionally that request was from four months ago.

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 – Exemption where cost of compliance exceeds appropriate limit

An Analyst in the Complaints and Discipline Department has advised that Complaints are not recorded in a retrievable format for those relating to schools. She has stated that she would need to manually check records of any Officers provided to her that were identified as working in or responsible for a school, and see if they were relevant to your request.

In a previous FOI request it was confirmed that for the Financial years, between April 2016 and March 2020, there were a total of 2128 complaints received. This equates to an average of 532 complaints per year. As stated, the Analyst would need to retrieve and review each record that may mention and Officer that was working in or with a school, but they would also have to review all the other complaints to see if they were also relevant to your request as all Officers could come into contact with a school in the course of their daily duties. If each record took just 5 minutes to read through, it would greatly exceed the 18 hours as guided under the FOI Act.

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.

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