

Our Ref: IM-FOI-2015-1181



Sir Stephen House QPM
Chief Constable

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (SCOTLAND) ACT 2002

I refer to your recent request for information which has been handled in accordance with the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

For ease of reference, your request is replicated below together with the response.

1) Information on all reported incidents of "missing person" in:

a) 2013-14

b) 2014-15

Including details of each missing person's age, their mental state (if noted), how long they were missing for and any other details about the incident that are readily available and you would be able to share without breaching data protection laws.

Specifically, I'm only interested in details of those over 70 years old who have gone missing, however, I thought that it may be too time consuming to extract that information and it may be easier to ask for the whole set and extract it myself.

In 2014 a Strategic Assessment was commissioned to ascertain the number of people who had been reported to Police Scotland as missing in 2013/14. The analysis found that throughout this reporting period there were 37,640 missing person's incidents created. Of these incidents police enquiries determined that 31,697 were confirmed as missing persons.

In 2014/15 Police Scotland recorded 39,926 missing person related incidents and 35,271 of these were confirmed as missing episodes. Please note however that the overall missing person related incident data pertaining to 2013/14 are however not comparable with 2014/15 as Police Scotland has changed the way that Missing Person Incidents are defined and counted.

The information requested is not held in an easily retrievable format that would allow the statistics required to be extracted. Indeed this is why our Analysis and Performance Unit were specifically tasked to look at this subject, as it requires significant analytical assessment to obtain statistics. To explain, when a person is reported as missing, it is recorded on police systems. However, statistics from the systems do not accurately reflect the number of missing persons as the record is created on the basis of the initial missing person report made to Police Scotland and will often relate to individuals who are not in the place they are meant to be, e.g. not home on time, as opposed to being truly missing.

Unfortunately the only way to identify those incidents that relate to missing persons to the level of detail required in your request would be to manually read each incident report and extract the data required to answer the remaining questions. Given the number of

incidents recorded in 2013/14 it would be a considerable task to undertake this exercise for the 2013/14 and 2014/15 periods and the cost of locating and retrieving the information would exceed the cost limits set within the Fees Regulations of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. As you may be aware the current cost threshold is £600 and I estimate that it would cost well in excess of this amount to process your request.

In accordance with Section 12(1) of this Act this letter represents a Refusal notice for this part of the request, Excessive Cost of Compliance.

The full set of data cannot be released to you as it will contain personal information. Section 16 requires Police Scotland when refusing to provide such information because it is exempt, to provide you with a notice which:

- (a) States that it holds the information,
- (b) States that it is claiming an exemption,
- (c) Specifies the exemption in question and
- (d) States (if not otherwise apparent) why the exemption applies.

I can confirm that Police Scotland holds the information that you have requested.

The exemption that I consider to be applicable to the information requested by you is section 38(1) (b) - Personal Information.

The release of personal information, either directly or inadvertently is exempt under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and I must apply Section 38(1) (b) of the Act to this part of your request.

Should you require any further assistance concerning this matter please contact me directly on 01259 728227 quoting the reference number given.

If you are not satisfied with the way in which your request has been dealt with, you are entitled in the first instance, and within 40 working days of receiving this response, to request a review of the decision. Should you wish to do so, contact details are; FOI Central Processing Unit, Police Scotland, Clyde Gateway, 2 French Street, Dalmarnock, G40 4EH - foi@scotland.pnn.police.uk

If you remain dissatisfied following the outcome of that review, you are thereafter entitled to apply to the Scottish Information Commissioner within six months for a decision. Contact details are; Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner, Kinburn Castle, Doubledykes Road, St Andrews, Fife, KY16 9DS - enquiries@itspublicknowledge.info

Should you wish to appeal against the Scottish Information Commissioner's decision, there is an appeal to the Court of Session on a point of law only.

Yours sincerely,

Stuart Macfarlane
Information Management