



**Kent
Police**



Ms Marion Cooper
[request-706903-
f00e6471@whatdotheyknow.com](#)

Direct Line: 01622 652610
E-mail: freedomofinformation@kent.police.uk

Date: 16th December 2020
FOI Ref: 20/11/1363

Dear Ms Cooper,

Freedom of Information Request 20/11/1363

I write in response to your request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 received on **18th November 2020**.

Activities are recorded whereby individuals are selected for harassment and extreme persecution. Such people have become known as Targeted Individuals. Local Police are responsible for all manner of activities against such individuals. These include: extreme harassment, persecution, intimidation, stalking, dissemination of false information on such individuals, character assassination and more. The following information is being requested for activities on the part of Police:

- 1. Who is responsible for the control and operations of these activities surrounding Targeted Individuals in Kent Police?*
- 2. What are the numbers of officers engaged in these activities specifically? Are officers from any other forces, or branches, involved in this work? Is there a specific unit which directs these operations?*
- 3. Police are known to be responsible for the dissemination of false information to third parties, which smears the characters of these individuals. It also deliberately portrays them in a bad light by spreading falsehoods about them. It is known as a fact that Police defame these individuals by slander and libel. Amongst other things, third parties have been advised they have criminal convictions, or engage in criminal behaviour, when they do not. Who is responsible for the selection of people to be targeted in this manner? Who directs these activities and directs the operation subsequently? Who undertake the actual character assassination? Why are such individuals selected when they do not have any criminal convictions, do not commit crimes, or engage in criminal behaviour?*
- 4. Police, or their agents, undertake surveillance of these individuals. Some of this is covert surveillance, such as following on foot, using vehicles to follow them, monitoring phone calls, bank transactions and travel. Who controls these activities? Are they undertaken lawfully, ie have the necessary legal procedures been put in place beforehand, RIPA etc? Are officers who do this work in a special unit, or are they Police officers in general?*
- 5. Information indicates that, on occasions, outside agents, or people, are used for this work. Is this the case? Who is responsible for the recruitment of these people? What sums are paid to them for this work? Are these monies subject to tax? How much has been paid to these people, or agents, for each of the last 10 years?*
- 6. Are the costs of these activities calculated by Kent Police? Are there any figures, or estimates, of the costs involved for each of the last 10 years? Are they borne by Police, or another body?*
- 7. Has the appropriate Police and Crime Commissioner been advised of these activities?*

8. *Has any legal opinion been obtained as to the lawfulness of these activities?*

9. *Is it the policy of Kent Police to target people for political reasons, or for reasons other than law enforcement?*

Kent Police does not recognise the term 'targeted individual' which appears from your description to describe unlawful policing activity. Kent Police would not involve itself in the type of unlawful activity you have described and therefore it follows that no information is held in relation to questions 1-4 of this request.

For questions 5-8 of the request, Kent Police holds no information in respect of any persons, police or otherwise, who target and persecute individuals as you describe.

Despite this, in the context of legitimate policing, the tone of questions 5-8 could infer that you are requesting details relating to Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS). Therefore, in the context of legitimate policing and the use of CHIS, Kent Police can neither confirm nor deny whether such information is held by virtue of the exemption at section 31(3) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, which relates to 'Law enforcement.'

Evidence of Harm

It must be remembered that disclosure under the FOIA is a disclosure into the public domain and not just to the individual requesting the information. Confirmation or denial to the world that any information relating to the legitimate use of CHIS is held would undermine policing. For instance, if this request was sent nationally and each force confirmed or not whether information were held this would allow for criminals to geographically map activities, hence undermining policing. As a result of this mapping they could look to exploit vulnerable areas.

To confirm or deny information is held in this case has the potential to undermine the flow of information (intelligence) received from members of the public into the Police Service and other outside agencies relating to criminal activity. This could lead to police officers having to be removed from their frontline duties in order to increase staffing relating to this subject matter. As resources are already stretched this would cause significant issues for the police service being able to effectively operate.

Public interest considerations

Factors favouring complying with Section 1(1)(a)(b) - There is public interest in transparency and accountability where the police service is concerned as public taxes fund the Police and this obviously favours confirmation or denial.

Factors against complying with Section 1(1)(a)(b) - Confirming or denying whether information is held would suggest that Kent Police takes its responsibility to protect confidential information provided to them seriously and appropriately to ensure operational law enforcement is effectively delivered.

Additionally, Kent Police has a duty of care to the community at large and public safety is of great importance. An FOI response revealing information, by citing an exemption or stating no information held, which confirms police are aware of criminal activity in a particular force area, would cause significant issues. These issues would be criminals targeting specific locations where covert activity may be revealed. Criminals are always evolving their approach, therefore by being provided the information to geographically map out vulnerable locations could lead to an increase of criminal offences occurring at specific locations. An increase of crime would significantly affect operational policing and further stretch resources.

Balancing test

There are points that highlight the merits of confirming or denying whether information pertinent to this request exists around transparency and accountability.

Nevertheless, the Police Service relies heavily on members of the public providing information to assist in criminal investigations and has a duty to protect those individuals considered to be vulnerable. Anything which places that confidence at risk, no matter how generic, would

undermine any trust or confidence individuals have in the Police Service. Additionally, the effective delivery of operational law enforcement takes priority and is at the forefront of Kent Police to ensure the prevention and detection of crime is carried out and the effective apprehension or prosecution of offenders is maintained. There is a need to ensure our relationship with other law enforcement agencies runs smoothly and we do not increase criminal activities for particular areas.

Therefore, at this moment in time, it is our opinion that for these issues the balance test supports the neither confirm nor deny approach.

Please note that this should be not be taken as confirmation or denial that any information is held in respect of your request.

In relation to question 9, it is not the policy of the Police Service to target people for political reasons or for reasons other than Law Enforcement.

Thank you for your interest in Kent Police. If you have any queries about your request or the application of the Freedom of Information Act generally, please contact this office quoting the reference number above.

Yours sincerely,

Adam Staden

Public Disclosure Officer



**Kent
Police**



Your right to appeal

We take our responsibilities under the Freedom of Information Act seriously but if you feel your request has not been properly handled or you are otherwise dissatisfied with the outcome of your request, you have 40 working days from the date the response is issued to request that Kent Police carry out an internal review.

If your request for a review concerns the decision to apply an exemption, it would assist if you would outline why you believe the exemption does not apply.

Kent Police will acknowledge receipt of any request for a review and aim to respond as soon as practicable, in most cases within 20 working days of receipt. If the review will not be completed in this timescale, you will be informed.

You may lodge your request for a review in writing:

Our email address is: freedomofinformation@kent.police.uk

Our postal address is:

Freedom of Information
Coldharbour,
London Road,
Aylesford,
Kent,
ME20 7SL

If you are still dissatisfied following our internal review, you have the right under section 50 of the Act to appeal directly to the Information Commissioner who would normally expect you to have exhausted the internal review procedure provided by Kent Police.

For information on how to appeal to the Information Commissioner please visit the website at www.ico.org.uk. Alternatively, phone or write to:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF
0303 123 1113