

Our Ref: IM-FOI-2021-0277
Date: 23rd April 2021



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (SCOTLAND) ACT 2002 - INTERNAL REVIEW

In accordance with section 20(1) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, I understand that you have requested a review of the decision communicated to you on xxx 2021 in respect of your original request for information, received xxx 2021.

Original Request

- 1. For the year 2019/20, please provide the number of arrests made in connection with all instances of online grooming offences by adults against children.**
- 2. For the year 2019/20, please provide the number and names of all so-called paedophile hunting groups associated with the online grooming offences identified in 1.**

Request for Review

I do not consider that the information I have requested is personal data. I have requested the names of groups that tend to publicise their activities online. Anti-paedophile groups I am aware of who have 'caught' suspected paedophiles in Scotland include Wolf Pack Hunters UK, Innocent Voices, Maximum Exposure UK, Child Online Safety Team, SGTI, Keeping Kids Safe, Justice4Kids, The Forbidden Scotland, Decoy North, Child Protectors Scotland, Dark Justice and Groom Resisters Scotland. Stories about such groups are plentiful in the media. For example:

"Supreme Court ruling 'seen as green light for paedophile hunters'"

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/18585188.supreme-court-ruling-seen-green-light-paedophile-hunters/>

"Vigilante 'paedophile hunters' caught same man twice in five months"

<https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/scotland/1513685/vigilante-paedophile-hunters-caught-same-man-twice-in-five-months/>

"Paedophile hunters 'uncover half of child grooming cases'"

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<https://news.stv.tv/scotland/paedophile-hunters-uncover-half-of-child-grooming-cases?top>

"Glenmore Lodge instructor exposed as pervert by paedo hunters"

<https://www.strathspey-herald.co.uk/news/head-instructor-at-glenmore-exposed-as-a-pervert-by-paedophile-hunters-226620/>

"Highland man snared by paedophile hunters avoids jail sentence"

<https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/highlands/2516872/highland-man-snared-by-paedophile-hunters-avoids-jail-sentence/>

I also note from your response the absence of any attempt on your part to contact the groups concerned to see if they would object to having their names disclosed. They may have no objections at all.

My role is to consider the response issued and determine whether or not your request was handled in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

As part of the review, I am also required to consider the quality of the administrative process applied to your request and I note that your request was not responded to by the 20 working day legislative deadline.

The Force has therefore clearly failed on this occasion with regard to this legislative obligation and for that I apologise.

In reviewing the response I have studied all documentation relevant to the request, including that which documents both the research carried out and the decision making process.

The decision I have to make is whether or not section 16 of the Act, in conjunction with the exemption(s) set out at section(s) 38(1)(b), was correctly applied to your request.

On examination of your request I note that question 1 of your request has been refused under Section 12(1) of the Act as it was not possible to retrieve the statistics requested within cost. As question 2 of your request is asking for information which relies on the data obtained in question 1, an excessive cost exemption should have been applied to our second answer. We are unable to retrieve the information required to answer the second question within cost as we cannot retrieve the initial dataset required in question 1.

Taking all of the above into account, I am not satisfied that your request has been handled in accordance with the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and in terms of section 21(4)(b) of the Act, I overturn the original response as I do not agree that section 16 of the Act was correctly applied.

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Should you require any further assistance concerning this matter please contact Information Management - Edinburgh quoting the reference number given.

If you remain dissatisfied following the outcome of this review, you are thereafter entitled to apply to the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner within six months for a decision. You can apply [online](#), by email to enquiries@itspublicknowledge.info or by post to Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner, Kinburn Castle, Doubledykes Road, St Andrews, Fife, KY16 9DS.

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

