

Our Ref: IM-FOI-2020-0563  
Date: 21 April 2020



## 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. Please accept our apologies for the delay of your response.

Prior to responding to your information request, I wish to highlight that keeping children and young people safe is a priority for Police Scotland and we strive to continually improve our understanding of the nature and scale of child sexual abuse. We work closely with partner agencies to identify children who may be at risk of the many forms of child abuse including; neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse, Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), grooming and increasingly, the threat of online offending.

Protecting children requires a well-co-ordinated and committed partnership approach where children and young people who may be at risk are proactively identified, protected and supported. Through partnership working we will improve our response to Child Protection and increase opportunities for early and effective interventions in respect of children and perpetrators.

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

***In a recent HMICS report entitled “Strategic Review of Police Scotland's response to online child sexual abuse” it was revealed that in 2019 Police Scotland received 1,961 referrals for online child abuse (page 3):***

***<https://www.hmics.scot/sites/default/files/publications/HMICS20200226PUB.pdf>***

***On page 5 of the report it states:***

***“Almost half of the online grooming cases emanate from the activities of online child abuse activist groups (vigilante groups), who are unregulated and untrained. A more robust proactive capability on the part of Police Scotland would reduce the opportunities for these groups to operate.”***

***Please provide the names of all child activist groups referred to in the report and specify the number of grooming cases that emanated from each in 2019.***

I can advise you that Police Scotland does not hold the above requested information. In terms of Section 17 of the Act, this letter represents a formal notice that information is not held.

By way of explanation, I can advise that Police Scotland does not hold information in the requested format.

In order to provide the information requested a significant amount of manual intervention and design would be required to interrogate, extract and analyse data across Police Scotland's multiple legacy policing systems.

To explain, each former legacy force area operates its own recording system. These systems operate independently from each other and are not at present designed to enable the retrieval of the specific information required to answer your request.

The process would rely on being able to utilise data extraction tools to interrogate these ageing systems. The sheer volume of information contained within them along with varying data sets and terminology mean that any attempt to extract and provide meaningful data to answer your request would be extremely resource intensive and reliant on a number of factors. In order to extract the potentially relevant data it would involve the transformation and loading of existing data into a new format and new database, effectively creating new information, and as you may be aware your right under the Act is to obtain information that is held by a public authority at the time the request is received and there is no obligation on a public authority to create new information

Should you require any further assistance please contact Information Management - Glasgow on 01786 895862 quoting the reference number given.

If you are dissatisfied with the way in which Police Scotland has dealt with your request, you are entitled, in the first instance, to request a review of our actions and decisions.

Your request must specify the matter which gives rise to your dissatisfaction and it must be submitted within 40 working days of receiving this response - either by email to [foi@scotland.pnn.police.uk](mailto:foi@scotland.pnn.police.uk) or by post to Information Management (Disclosure), Police Scotland, Clyde Gateway, 2 French Street, Dalmarnock, G40 4EH.

If you remain dissatisfied following the outcome of that 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](mailto: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.

As part of our commitment to demonstrate openness and transparency in respect of the information we hold, an anonymised version of this response will be posted to the Police Scotland Freedom of Information [Disclosure Log](#) in seven days' time.