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Our Ref: IM-FOI-2022-2245
Date: 18th November 2022



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.

Can you please send me the policies/procedures/ guidelines that Police Scotland follow/implement when:

1. A person has threatened suicide?

Please be advised that information regarding some suicide prevention is publicly available.

As such, in terms of Section 16 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, I am refusing to provide you with the information sought. 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 that would not be otherwise apparent, why the exemption applies.

I can confirm that Police Scotland holds the information that you have requested and the exemption that I consider to be applicable is set out at Section 25(1) of the Act - information otherwise accessible:

“Information which the applicant can reasonably obtain other than by requesting it under Section 1(1) is exempt information”

However, to be of assistance please see the links below, the first two links are publically available on the Police Scotland website.

Suicide Prevention Guidance:

<https://www.scotland.police.uk/access-to-information/policies-and-procedures/guidance-documents/guidance-documents-p-s/>

Mental Health and Place of Safety Standard Operating Procedure:

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<https://www.scotland.police.uk/access-to-information/policies-and-procedures/standard-operating-procedures/standard-operating-procedures-j-o/>

Additionally please see the attached document, Decision Making Model applied to Mental Health Incidents and the aide memoir for guidance relating to the management of mental health incidents. These are provided at attachments 01 and 02 respectively.

2. Procedures if they can't make contact with the suicidal person?

The requested procedure document has been reviewed and in terms of Section 16 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, I am refusing to provide you with the information sought. 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 that would not be otherwise apparent, why the exemption applies.

The exemptions I find appropriate are Section 39(1) – Health, safety and the environment.

Section 39(1) - Health, safety and the environment

Information is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to, endanger the physical or mental health or the safety of an individual. Persons who contact the police to advise they are suicidal are at heightened risk of harm and Police Scotland has a duty to assist and protect such individuals.

Releasing the specific procedures and tactics employed by officers to help and trace suicidal persons may lead to such persons evading help or police assistance. This cannot but increase the risk that individuals may harm themselves prior to police and other agencies reaching them.

This is a non-absolute exemption and requires the application of the public interest test.

Public Interest Test

I would suggest that public accountability may favour disclosure, given that the information concerns the efficient and effective use of resources by the Service. Likewise, disclosure of the information would also inform the public debate on the issue of policing and contribute to the accuracy of that debate.

However, any disclosure under FOI legislation is a disclosure to the world at large and there is a strong argument to withhold any information which may cause a direct risk to the health and safety of individuals who are suicidal.

As such it is my belief that it is not in the public interest to disclose information which would jeopardise the safety of individuals.

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However, by way of assistance please see the Missing Person Investigation Standard Operating Procedure which is publically available on the Police Scotland website.

<https://www.scotland.police.uk/access-to-information/policies-and-procedures/standard-operating-procedures/standard-operating-procedures-j-o/>

3. Are the family/GP/ made aware of the threat to life?

In response to your question I can advise that Mental Health and Place of Safety Standard Operating Procedure provides that where an officer has exercised the emergency power they have a statutory responsibility of ensuring the relevant person's 'nearest' relative in informed of the detention or where this is not possible the person they reside or their carer.

Additionally, the same Standard Operating Procedure notes that interim Vulnerable Persons Database (iVPD) Concern Form relating to a removal of a person under the act (The Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003) to a Place of Safety accurately recorded allows the Risk and Concern Hub to fulfil Police Scotland's Statutory requirement to inform others.

4. Do Police Scotland treat suicidal threats as an emergency or routine enquiry?

The response to calls and incidents where there is mention of suicidal threats are risk assessed individually in line with the Contact Assessment Model (CAM). This allows each incident to be risk assessed on its own merit with six individual criteria being taken in to consideration when doing so. The six criteria that are considered are Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability and Engagement, this makes up a THRIVE assessment and assists staff members and controllers within the Service Centre and Area Control Rooms to accurately evaluate the information and decide on an appropriate response to each incident.

Should you require any further assistance please contact Information Management 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.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 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.

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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.