

Our Ref: IM-FOI-2022-2474  
Date: 6<sup>th</sup> December 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.

**For each calendar year 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 and for the period 1st January 2022 to 15th November 2022, please tell me:**

- 1) The total number of threat to life warning notices, also known as Osman warnings, issued by your force**
- 2) The number of threat to life disruption notices issued by your force (i.e. notices issued to potential perpetrators where there is credible intelligence they are planning to harm another person).**

The police have an obligation to take all reasonable steps to protect the lives of people where there is a “real and immediate” risk to them from the criminal acts of another.

To clarify further, such incidents which are classed as being a ‘real and immediate’ risk; and where the serving of notices is deemed appropriate are documented, for example:

- Threat to life warning notice – Would be considered for issue to a potential “victim” where it is assessed there is credible intelligence that there is a viable threat to that person’s life.
- Personal safety advice warning notice – Would be considered where it is assessed there is credible intelligence that a person may be at risk of personal injury.
- Disruption notice and Disruption Interview Notices – Would be considered for issue to potential perpetrators where there is credible intelligence that persons may be involved in a criminal act.

In response to your request, it is important to ensure that the terminology ‘*Osman Warnings*’ is interpreted accurately i.e. as a Threat to Life (TTL) warning notice when intelligence exists that there is a viable threat to life.

For absolute clarity on this matter, TTL Warning Notices and Personal Safety Advice Warning Notices are only issued to potential victims who have been fully identified.

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Having examined the type and number of warnings notified to the National Intelligence Bureau per the Threat to Life Standard Operating Procedure I can confirm the total number issued in each full calendar year 2018 to 2021 incl. is as follows:

	<b>Threat to Life Warnings</b>	<b>Personal Safety Advice Notices</b>	<b>Threat to Life Disruption Notices</b>
<b>2018</b>	13	87	78
<b>2019</b>	17	162	181
<b>2020</b>	18	161	186
<b>2021</b>	20	152	165

*Note: A recent review of our recording processes across many business areas may result in some minor differences between this and previously published data*

**3) How many of the threat to life warning notices issued by your force to people aged under 18?**

**4) How many of the threat to life warning notices were issued to men and how many were issued to women?**

**If you are unable to break down the figures to show the number of threat to life warning notices issued to under 18s, or how many were issued to men and how many were issued to women, please answer question 1 only.**

In relation to both the requested data for (part year) 2022 and the breakdown for under 18 year olds, I am refusing to confirm or deny whether the information sought exists or is held by Police Scotland in terms of section 18 of the Act. I must also advise you that specific information such as the age group of those individuals in receipt of such notices will not be discussed in the public domain.

Section 18 applies where the following two conditions are met:

- It would be contrary to the public interest to reveal whether the information is held
- If the information was held, it would be exempt from disclosure in terms of one or more of the exemptions set out in sections 28 to 35, 38, 39(1) or 41 of the Act

In accordance with the conditions above, Police Scotland can neither confirm nor deny that it holds the information you have requested.

Firstly, sections 38(1)(b) and 38(1)(2A) of the Act may apply insofar as you have requested third party personal data which is exempt from disclosure where it is assessed that disclosure would contravene the data protection principles as defined in the Act.

The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 makes it a legal requirement that an authority has to not only provide information (unless it is exempt), but to also confirm whether or not that information is held, unless to do so would be contrary to the public interest and the information, if it was held, would be exempt from disclosure.

The primary objectives of such measures are to preserve the lives of all assessed as immediately involved and ensure public safety.

It is acknowledged that matters relating to the use of Threat to Life Disruption Notices are of public interest and such awareness may favour confirming or otherwise the existence of further information of relevance, as it would contribute to the public debate surrounding the issue.

However I would argue that the integrity of any protective measures would be significantly undermined if we were to confirm the extent of information held, through FOI or otherwise, and any such disclosure would substantially prejudice the ability of Police Scotland with regards the prevention and detection of crime and the apprehension or prosecution of offenders.

Section 2(1) & (2) of the Act provide that information can only be considered exempt in terms of the exemptions set out above to the extent that the public interest in disclosing the information is not outweighed by that in maintaining the exemption.

### Public Interest

The key test when considering where the balance of public interest lies is to establish whether, in all the circumstances of the request, the public interest in confirming or denying the information is held is not outweighed by maintaining the exemption(s).

Although I consider that public awareness would favour a disclosure as it would contribute to the public debate surrounding the application of these measures, we must ensure that the release of this level of detail is not inadvertently providing potentially harmful information and placing an individual at risk. This is a matter of principle which applies equally to any member of the public who could find themselves subject to this or other protective measures in a variety of circumstances.

In conclusion, it simply cannot be in the public interest for Police Scotland or any police force to confirm details relating to those individuals, who are currently, or have been in the past, subject to this process.

This explanation should not be taken as indicative or conclusive evidence that the information you have requested exists or does not exist

Should you require any further assistance please contact Information Management Dundee, 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](mailto: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](mailto:enquiries@itspublicknowledge.info) or by post to Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner, Kinburn Castle, Doubledykes Road, St Andrews, Fife, KY16 9DS.

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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.

