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Our Ref: IM-FOI-2021-2741
Date: 10th January 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.

I write regarding the false allegation(s) of child sexual abuse raised against a named individual. I note that this individual has been falsely accused of child sexual abuse and that the Prosecutor Fiscals Office has withdrawn the false charges against the individual who is not-guilty/guiltless/guilt-free.

I would therefore request under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002:

A) A copy of all Police intelligence collected to falsely accuse this individual by Police Scotland along with the false accuser(s) initial statement of allegation as well as a transcript of any recorded interviews of both the falsely accused and false accuser(s) please include an inventory of all claimed evidence collected.

B) A copy of the name, rank and number of the Police Scotland officer(s) who initially charged the individual whom maintains his innocence. Because he is innocent.

C) A copy of when the false accusation(s) were made along with the name and address of the false accuser(s) for the public's knowledge.

Please note that whilst I note you have used terms such as "falsely accused" and similar within your request, they have been disregarded in my interpretation. Whilst I accept you feel the above to be true, my response should not be taken as agreement by Police Scotland in regards to your assertions.

Whilst in normal cases, your request would be answered with a neither confirm nor deny exemption under Section 18 of the Act, I judge that due to the high profile nature of the case concerned, the argument falls on the side of public interest and so the information requested has been further considered to see if it can be released.

After full consideration and in terms of section 16 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, I am refusing to provide you with the information requested.

Section 16 requires Police Scotland when refusing to provide such information because it is exempt, to provide you with a notice which:

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- (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.

The exemptions that I consider to be applicable to the information requested by you are:

Section 34(1) & (b) – Investigations
Section 35(1)(b) – Law Enforcement
Section 38(1)(b) - Personal Data
Section 39(1) – Health, safety and the environment

Section 34(1)(b) – Investigations
Section 35(1)(b) – Law Enforcement
Section 39(1) – Health, safety and the environment

Section 34(1)(b) of the Act provides an absolute exemption from disclosure in that information is exempt information if it has at any time been held by Police Scotland for the purposes of an investigation which may lead to a decision to make a report to the Procurator Fiscal to enable it to be determined whether criminal proceedings should be instituted.

In regards to Section 35(1)(a)(b) and 39(1), as per the above, release of this information would be likely to prejudice substantially the ability of the police to investigate and detect crime, and would have a similar detrimental impact on the apprehension or prosecution of offenders.

It would provide an insight into complex investigations and would be extremely useful for criminals and those intent on wrongdoing and would assist them in circumventing the efficient and effective provision of law enforcement by the police service, which in turn would have an adverse impact on the safety of the officers involved and the general public.

This would increase the risk to the personal safety of individuals and also the safety of the police officers responding to incidents.

These are non-absolute exemptions and requires the application of the public interest test.

Public Interest Test

Public awareness would favour a disclosure as it would contribute to the public debate surrounding a high profile and complex investigations and the police handling of such enquiries.

I would, however, contend that the efficient/effective conduct of the service and public safety favours retention of the information as it cannot be in the public interest to release information that would prejudice law enforcement or which is likely to have an adverse impact upon public safety.

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Accordingly, at this time the public interest lies in protecting the integrity of investigative and criminal justice procedures by refusing to provide the information sought.

I appreciate that there is a public interest in relation to police investigations and in particular high profile investigations. That said, it is essential that neither the investigation nor the potential for proceedings to be brought against an individual are put at risk.

Section 38(1)(b) - Personal Data

Personal data is defined in Article 4 of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) as:

‘Information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person (“data subject”); an identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person’

Section 38(2A) of the Act provides that personal data is exempt from disclosure where disclosure would contravene any of the data protection principles set out at Article 5(1) of the GDPR which states that:

‘Personal data shall be processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner in relation to the data subject’

Article 6 of the GDPR goes on to state that processing shall be lawful only if certain conditions are met.

The only potentially applicable condition is set out at Article 6(1)(f) which states:

‘Processing is necessary for the purposes of the legitimate interests pursued by the controller or by a third party, except where such interests are overridden by the interests or fundamental rights and freedoms of the data subject which require protection of personal data, in particular where the data subject is a child’

Whilst I accept that you may have a legitimate interest with regards the disclosure of this information and that disclosure may well be necessary for that purpose, I am nonetheless of the view that those interests are overridden by the interests or fundamental rights and freedoms of the data subject.

On that basis, it is my view that disclosure of the information sought would be unlawful.

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.pnn.police.uk or by post to Information Management (Disclosure), Police Scotland, Clyde Gateway, 2 French Street, Dalmarnock, G40 4EH.

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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.

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.