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Our Ref: IM-FOI-2022-1473
Date: 22 July 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.

Please may you provide me with any details of the number and types of reports, complaints, and any other contacts relating to protests outside abortion clinics in Scotland since January 1st 2016.

If you need addresses in order to cross-check your records, here is a list of all the clinics in Scotland:

Ross Hall Hospital	Whitburn Health Centre
Spire Murrayfield Hospital	Sexual Health Fife
Aberdeen Maternity Hospital	Dovecot Clinic
Aberdeen Community Health & Care Village	Sexual Health Fife,
Aviemore Health Centre	Lochgelly Health Centre
Banff Chalmers Hospital	St Andrews Community Hospital
Chalmers Sexual Health Centre	St Andrews Community Hospital
Ninewells Hospital	Clackmannanshire Community Healthcare Centre
Fort William Highland Sexual Health Clinic	Falkirk Community Hospital
Invergordon Highland Sexual Health Clinic	Stirling Community Hospital
Inverness Highland Sexual Health Clinic	Spittal Street Clinic
Dr MacKinnon Memorial Hospital	Zone 14, Raigmore Hospital
Drumhar Health Centre	The Corner
Sandyford Central Sexual Health	Dunbar Hospital
Bathgate Primary Care Centre	Caithness General Hospital
Craigmillar Medical Centre	Drumhar Health Centre
Dalkeith Medical Centre	Ayrshire Maternity Unit
Leith Community Treatment Centre	Galashiels Health Centre,
Sighthill Health Centre	Sexual Health D&G
Tranent Health Centre	Queen Elizabeth University Hospital

[List abbreviated - further address details for each premises provided by applicant]

In researching your various requests, our main source of data would be the Police Scotland incident recording system - STORM.

To explain, when a matter is reported to the police - usually by 101 or 999 call - or otherwise comes to police attention, an incident will be logged on this system.

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Incidents are categorised to an extent but I would stress first of all that there is no incident classification which would directly relate to the type of incident described in your request.

On the contrary, it is considered likely that such incidents could be recorded under a number of different categories depending on the circumstances - for example *noise, disturbance, assault, crime in progress, concern for person* etc.

As such, there is no meaningful way the incident classifications could be used to narrow down the information held in relation to each location in terms of your request.

Furthermore, it is recognised that such groups can tend to congregate around the outskirts of such premises - particular larger hospitals - the junction/ road leading up to etc.

For that reason, it is considered more likely that any incidents of relevance to your request might actually be recorded *not* at the exact address of the premises but at a location in the near vicinity.

I'm sure you can appreciate that even for a period of a just a year, a busy hospital can be recorded as the locus for a great many incidents, each of which would have to be individually assessed for potential relevance to your request.

You have listed 40 locations in your request - which in accordance with the £600 fees limit (at a cost of £15 per hour) essentially leaves us with one hour to research each location in that way.

Given the number of incidents involved - particularly at the larger premises - I regret to inform you that I am unable to provide you with the information you have requested, as it would prove too costly to do so within the context of the fee regulations.

As such, and in terms of Section 16(4) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 where Section 12(1) of the Act (Excessive Cost of Compliance) has been applied, this represents a refusal notice for the information sought.

Taking all of the above into account, and in terms of our section 15 duty to advise and assist applicants, I can however offer the following advice.

First of all, our STORM incident recording system was only introduced nationally in February 2018.

The period prior has all of the issues outlined above but further exacerbated by the fact that data is held in eight different systems - all with different system architecture and search capabilities.

I would therefore recommend that any new search be focused on the period February 2018 to date or it will undoubtedly invoke the excess cost exemption.

I cannot stress enough that Police Scotland *do not* consider key word searches for specific words/ phrases to be an accurate means of analysis in most circumstances - *however* we do have the ability in STORM to conduct such searches.

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Applicants in previous FOIs have requested data on incidents where the description includes some or all of the following words/ phrases - 'pro-life', 'pro-choice', 'abortion', 'vigil' or 'prayer' etc.

Whilst it would be nigh on impossible to come up with a list of comprehensive search terms, it is considered likely that the phrases listed above ought to capture any incidents of relevance.

That may be something you wish to consider albeit I must stress that there may well be incidents of relevance which do not include the specific phrases chosen.

You should also consider that a keyword search will undoubtedly include incidents *not relevant* to your request - for example where the keyword hit has been a mere coincidence rather than directly relevant.

For example, an individual may attend at an abortion clinic and have a handbag stolen etc.

Further, we cannot exclude hits where the search term is part of a word - and so an incident with a comment - *hospital staff have been advised to be vigilant given the recent thefts* etc would be captured.

It is also quite common for the mere presence of an anti-abortion group to be reported to the police for information purposes - not a complaint as such.

If you did decide to submit a revised request I would suggest that you consider a specifying a boundary area around each location - for example within 100m of a smaller premises, within 300m of a larger premises etc.

Finally, where we have conducted such research in the past it has been for a far smaller list of premises but the time involved has been quite considerable nonetheless (you can view those FOIs by searching our [FOI Disclosure Log](#) for 'pro-life').

You may therefore wish to consider whether data for every premises on your list is necessary in order to ensure that the excess cost exemption would not apply.

I believe some of the premises listed might offer sexual health/ unplanned pregnancy advice etc as opposed to actually offering abortion services.

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.