

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)

Decision notice

Date: 25 November 2021

Public Authority: Chief Constable of Sussex Police

Address: Sussex Police Headquarters
Malling House
Church Lane
Lewes
East Sussex
BN7 2DZ

Decision (including any steps ordered)

1. The complainant requested information from the Chief Constable of Sussex Police ("Sussex Police") relating to child criminal exploitation. By the date of this notice, Sussex Police had not issued a substantive response to this request.
2. The Commissioner's decision is that Sussex Police has breached section 10(1) of the FOIA in that it failed to provide a valid response to the request within the statutory time frame of 20 working days.
3. The Commissioner requires Sussex Police to take the following step to ensure compliance with the legislation.
 - Sussex Police must provide a substantive response to the request in accordance with its obligations under the FOIA.
4. Sussex Police must take this step within 35 calendar days of the date of this decision notice. Failure to comply may result in the Commissioner making written certification of this fact to the High Court pursuant to section 54 of the Act and may be dealt with as a contempt of court.

Request and response

5. On 28 May 2021, the complainant wrote to Sussex Police and requested information in the following terms:

"Under freedom of information legislation, I am seeking the following information:

- A copy of any intelligence reports or problem profiles on the issue of child criminal exploitation, including but not limited to county lines drug dealing, produced between January 1, 2010, and the present day.

I would be grateful if you could provide answers via email. Please contact me using the details below if you have any queries."

6. Whilst Sussex Police did not acknowledge this request, the complainant has provided evidence which shows that the request was sent to Sussex Police's published email address. Therefore, the Commissioner has assumed that the request was received by Sussex Police.
7. By the date of this notice, Sussex Police has not provided the complainant with a substantive response to her request.

Scope of the case

8. The complainant contacted the Commissioner on 6 November 2021 to complain about Sussex Police's failure to respond to their request.
9. The Commissioner has considered whether Sussex Police has complied with its obligations in relation to the time for compliance at section 10(1) of the FOIA.

Reasons for decision

10. Section 1(1) of the FOIA states that:

"Any person making a request for information to a public authority is entitled –

(a) to be informed in writing by the public authority whether it holds information of the description specified in the request, and

(b) if that is the case, to have that information communicated to him."

11. Section 10(1) of the FOIA states that a public authority must respond to a request promptly and "*not later than the twentieth working day following the date of receipt*".
12. On 8 November 2021 the Commissioner wrote to Sussex Police, reminding it of its responsibilities and asking it to provide a substantive response to the complainant's request within 10 working days.
13. Despite this intervention Sussex Police has failed to respond to the complainant.
14. From the evidence provided to the Commissioner in this case, it is clear that Sussex Police did not deal with the request for information in accordance with the FOIA. The Commissioner finds that Sussex Police has breached section 10(1) by failing to respond to the request within 20 working days and it is now required to respond to the request in accordance with the FOIA.

Right of appeal

15. Either party has the right to appeal against this decision notice to the First-tier Tribunal (Information Rights). Information about the appeals process may be obtained from:

First-tier Tribunal (Information Rights)
GRC & GRP Tribunals,
PO Box 9300,
LEICESTER,
LE1 8DJ

Tel: 0203 936 8963

Fax: 0870 739 5836

Email: grc@justice.gov.uk

Website: www.justice.gov.uk/tribunals/general-regulatory-chamber

16. If you wish to appeal against a decision notice, you can obtain information on how to appeal along with the relevant forms from the Information Tribunal website.
17. Any Notice of Appeal should be served on the Tribunal within 28 (calendar) days of the date on which this decision notice is sent.

Signed

Michael Lea
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